

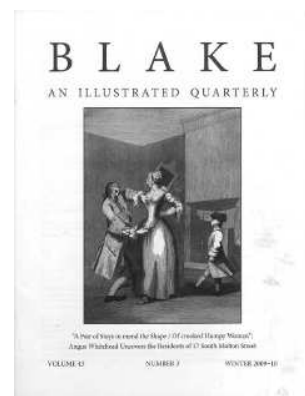
# AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

A R T I C L E

## Mark and Eleanor Martin, the Blakes' French Fellow Inhabitants at 17 South Molton Street, 1805-21

Angus Whitehead

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# Mark and Eleanor Martin, the Blakes' French Fellow Inhabitants at 17 South Molton Street, 1805–21

BY ANGUS WHITEHEAD

AS the first major Paris exhibition of the poet-artist's works in over sixty years has recently taken place,<sup>1</sup> it seems fitting to discuss William and Catherine Blake's sixteen-year association with a Parisian: their landlord at 17 South Molton Street, Mark Martin. In this paper, after a brief discussion of his predecessors, I present new information concerning Martin, his wife, his nationality, and his trade. I also discuss the relationship between the Martins and the Blakes and how the nature of that relationship throws light on the Blakes' seventeen-year residence in South Molton Street (illus. 1–2), a period of Blake's life of which we still know very little.

Mark Martin is at least in name not unfamiliar to Blake scholarship. In April 1830, almost three years after Blake's death, John Linnell recalled: "When I first became acquainted with M<sup>r</sup>. Blake he lived in a first floor in South Molton Street and upon his Landlord leaving off business & retiring to France, he moved to Fountain Court Strand, where he died."<sup>2</sup> In 1958 Paul Miner, on the basis of data from early nineteenth-century rate books for the parish of St. George, Hanover Square, first identified "the rate-payer [at 17 South Molton Street] for the period 1803–1821, presumably Blake's landlord," as Mark Martin.<sup>3</sup> Although most subsequent biographers have utilized Miner's discovery, none has expanded upon it. Martin has remained no more than a name, referred to as "Mark Martin," "one Mark Martin," or "a certain Mark Martin."<sup>4</sup> Commenting upon Linnell's recollection, Miner observed that, although Martin appears to have retired to France in 1821, "he seems to have retained ownership of the property; at any rate a 'Mark Martin' continued to pay the rates as late as 1829."<sup>5</sup> No subsequent biographer has discussed Mar-

tin or identified the business he must have left off in order to retire. Ruthven Todd observed that "it is not known whether the ground floor [of no. 17] was then used commercially as it has been for at least a century."<sup>6</sup> However, Peter Ackroyd first suggested that the Blakes' two rooms would have been situated "no doubt above some kind of commercial establishment."<sup>7</sup> In this essay I demonstrate that both Miner and Ackroyd were correct.

## The Blakes' Previous Landlord(s?) at South Molton Street: John Lytrott

However, Miner is mistaken in some details. Martin was not ratepayer (and consequently not landlord) at 17 South Molton Street between 1803 and 1804, when William and Catherine Blake first lodged there; he was their second or perhaps third landlord at this residence. The ratepayer in March 1803 is recorded as John Lytrott,<sup>8</sup> and the residential section of *Holden's Triennial Directory* lists a Captain John Lytrott.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore possible that the Blakes initially corresponded with, met, and even lodged briefly with Lytrott between his last appearance in the rate book in March 1803 and his absence therein the following year. Since the Blakes moved in about October 1803,<sup>10</sup> Lytrott may have been their landlord (if not necessarily their fellow inhabitant) for a period of up to five and a half months.<sup>11</sup>

On 17 May 1788, after partially retiring from the army, Lytrott married Ann MacDonald at St. George's, Hanover

6. Todd 63.

7. Ackroyd 248–49.

8. St. George's Parish, Hanover Square, Brook Street Ward, poor, watch, and paving rates, 1803 (City of Westminster Archives Centre [hereafter COWAC] C596).

9. *Holden's Triennial Directory* 1802–03–04 (1802) n. pag.

10. See Erdman [hereafter E] 737 (letter of 26 Oct. 1803). However, the South Molton Street address on this letter is in fact an insertion by Gilchrist (see Gilchrist 170). A letter of 7 Oct. 1803 suggests that the Blakes had only recently arrived in London (E 736–37).

11. Several facts concerning Lytrott's life can be traced. He was baptized in 1763 at St. George's Church, Hanover Square (*International Genealogical Index* <<http://www.familysearch.org>>), so was almost certainly born and bred in Mayfair. However, his name and choice of regiment suggest Scottish ancestry. On 19 Dec. 1777 he was commissioned as quartermaster for the first battalion of Major-General John Mackenzie, Lord Macleod's Highlanders, Seventy-Third Regiment, a Scottish regiment raised in response to the outbreak of the American war (see *A List of the General and Field Officers, As They Rank in the Army* [Dublin: Executors of David Hay, 1780] 148). The Seventy-Third served in southern India and sustained heavy losses at Cuddalore on 13 June 1783. In 1784 Lytrott appears in the army lists as second lieutenant (a commission almost certainly purchased) in the Royal North British Fusiliers, Twenty-First Foot. However, the entry indicates that he was collecting half pay, which suggests that he had retired or was unfit for active service (*A List of the Officers of the Army ... Complete to 1st June 1784* [Dublin: Abraham Bradley King, 1784] 294). Lytrott's listing in a new regiment and on half pay shortly after the battle of Cuddalore, coupled with his later appointment as captain of the Seventh Royal Veterans, a regiment for servicemen unfit for active duty (see below), implies that he was wounded or incapacitated during his service in India.

For advice and assistance during my research for and writing of this paper, I wish to thank Robert Essick, Ian Chipperfield, Rory Lalwan, Michael Phillips, Mark Crosby, and especially Anne-Laure Robert.

1. William Blake, le génie visionnaire du romantisme anglais, Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, Apr.–June 2009.

2. Letter to Bernard Barton, quoted in Bentley, *Blake Records* [hereafter BR(2)] 526. Alexander Gilchrist states in his 1863 biography that the move to Fountain Court occurred in 1821 (Gilchrist 282).

3. Miner 544.

4. See respectively Bentley, *Stranger* 260fn, King 158, Ackroyd 249.

5. Miner 544. He thanks "G. F. Osborn, Archivist, Westminster Public Libraries, for this information" (549n32).



1-2. 17 South Molton Street c. 1912 (watercolor by Frederick Adcock; City of Westminster Archives Centre, C138) and in August 2002 (photograph by Angus Whitehead).

Square.<sup>12</sup> A "Mrs MacDonald" and a "Ms MacDonald," probably Ann's daughter (named Christian, a common Scottish female forename in the period), had been ratepayers at 17 South Molton Street since 1786,<sup>13</sup> the year in which Alexander MacDonald, Ann's first husband and the previous ratepayer, had died.<sup>14</sup> In 1790 Lytrott replaced his wife and stepdaughter as ratepayer and, as we have seen, continued until sometime be-

12. St. George, Hanover Square, marriage register, vol. 254 (COWAC).

13. In 1786 "Mrs MacDonald," 1787-89 "Mrs, Ms MacDonald" (for 1788 and 1789 these entries have been subsequently scored through), 1790 "John Lytrott." See St. George's rates, 1786-90 (COWAC C382, 383, 384, 387, 583).

14. "Will of Alexander MacDonald or McDonald, Gentleman of South Molton Street Grosvenor Square, Middlesex," proved 11 May 1786 (PRO PROB 11/1142, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Will Registers, Norfolk Quire Numbers: 262-311). With Hugh Blair, Joseph Johnson, Anna Seward, Helen Maria Williams, and Richard Cosway, he was a subscriber to fellow Scots Maria and Harriet Falconar's *Poems* (see Falconar xxv), although the book was published after his death.

tween March 1803 and March 1804.<sup>15</sup> His ceasing to pay rates during this period is probably explained by the fact that on 25 December 1802 he became a captain in the Seventh Royal Veteran Battalion, raised under Major-General Thomas Murray and formed for those men discharged from cavalry and foot guards regiments as good for garrison duties only. It is likely that between December 1802 and March 1804 Lytrott moved from South Molton Street to the battalion's quarters at Fulham garrison.

Whether Lytrott's wealth derived from his wife or was his own, he appears to have been a man of some means, leaving

15. In 1793 Lytrott's regiment, the Twenty-First Foot, formed part of an expedition to the West Indies. However, his remaining on half pay suggests that he did not travel with it (*A List of the Officers of the Army* [Dublin: Printed by James King and A. Bradley King, 1795] 357). On 27 Aug. 1794 he was promoted to captain in the Twenty-First (*The Monthly Army List ... 1 Jan. 1798-1 June 1809* [London, 1798-1809] 483), and in 1795 he is recorded as captain on half pay in the Late Loyal Sheffield Regiment of Foot.

generous sums to servants on his death in 1809.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that these servants had been employed for several years and had therefore lived at South Molton Street five years earlier. Lytrott also bequeathed £100 to his stepdaughter, Mrs. Christian Hargreaves, née MacDonald. His evident wealth indicates that no. 17 was the well-kept home of a man of substance.

MacDonald and Lytrott describe themselves in their wills as gentlemen and as resident or formerly resident at South Molton Street. This may suggest that during the residence of both men, and probably since its construction (c. 1755), no. 17 served the purpose for which it was built: to accommodate one household. However, it is also possible that a shopkeeper or lodger may have rented a floor. Nevertheless, from the time that the house was built until the Blakes' arrival, persons of social rank paid the rates. From March 1804 until several decades after the Blakes left, the ratepayers were tradesmen, indicating a social shift in the history of the house.<sup>17</sup>

#### The Blakes' Previous Landlord(s?) at South Molton Street: William Enoch

A ratepayer at no. 17 who we can be certain preceded Martin as the Blakes' landlord and fellow inhabitant is William Enoch, who ran a tailor's shop from this address, presumably on the ground floor. Rate-book entries indicate that he assumed the rates as Lytrott ceased paying and in all probability left the premises, i.e., between March 1803 and March 1804. Enoch lived with his wife, Mary Naylor Enoch, and their infant son, William, above the shop.<sup>18</sup> In a letter of January 1804, written after his trial for sedition at Chichester, Blake informed William Hayley, "My poor wife has been near the Gate of Death as was supposed by our kind & attentive fellow inhabitant. the young & very amiable M<sup>rs</sup> Enoch. who gave my wife all the attention that a daughter could pay to a mother."<sup>19</sup> This implies extremely amiable relations between the Blakes and the Enochs, perhaps suggesting that they remained friends after the family left no. 17.<sup>20</sup> However, the business appears to have been experiencing difficulties by the closing months of 1804, necessitating the Enochs' departure from the

shop and apartment, certainly by March 1805 and perhaps as early as the autumn of 1804. As Mary Enoch had provided aid and solace to Catherine Blake in early 1804, the Blakes may have tried to assist their co-inhabitants at the end of that year as the business went under.

Entries from the *London Gazette* and *Jackson's Oxford Journal* during the first half of 1805 explain the brief duration of the Enochs' residence.<sup>21</sup> The *Gazette* for 22 January 1805 indicates that by this date Enoch had already been declared bankrupt. The fact that he is referred to as "late of 17 South Molton" suggests that the family had left by the end of 1804. However, no new address is mentioned. The same article reveals that Enoch had been ordered to surrender himself to the commission at Guildhall for examination on 5 and 9 February and 9 March to "make a full Discovery and Disclosure of his Estate and Effects."<sup>22</sup> On Saturday 2 February *Jackson's Oxford Journal* included Enoch in a list of bankrupts: "William Enoch ..., late of South Molton Street, Oxford Street, Middlesex, Tailor, February 5, 9, March 9 at Guildhall."<sup>23</sup> The settling of Enoch's affairs before the issuing of a certificate of bankruptcy must have taken longer than anticipated, as proceedings were adjourned on 9 March 1805 and reconvened on the 23rd at a meeting in which final creditors proved their debts.<sup>24</sup> On 14 May the *Gazette* reported:

Whereas the acting Commissioners in the Commission of Bankrupt awarded and issued forth against William Enoch, late of South-Molton-Street, Oxford-Street, in the County of Middlesex, Tailor, Dealer and Chapman, have certified to the Right Honorable John Lord Eldon, Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain, that the said William Enoch hath in all Things conformed himself according to the Directions of the several Acts of Parliament made concerning Bankrupts; This is to give Notice, that, by virtue of an Act passed in the Fifth Year of His late Majesty's Reign, his Certificate will be allowed and confirmed as the said Act directs, unless Cause be shewn to the contrary on or before the 8th Day of June next.<sup>25</sup>

#### Mark Martin

The rate-book entries for no. 17 reveal that Martin was first recorded as ratepayer in March 1805, approximately eighteen months after the Blakes moved into their lodgings.<sup>26</sup> However, it is possible that he had replaced the bankrupt Enoch as landlord and ratepayer as early as the autumn of 1804. Miner's statement that "a 'Mark Martin' continued to pay the rates as

16. He bequeathed Eleanor Ryan £500 and Thomas Branning "my servant and a private soldier in the Seventh Royal Veteran Battalion fifty pounds together with all my shirts and wearing apparel except my regimental cloak boots and accoutrements ..." (will of John Lytrott of Hanover Square, Middlesex, proved 17 July 1809 [PRO PROB 11/1501, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Will Registers, Loveday Quire Numbers: 560-617]). According to his will, Lytrott was living in Lower Swan Street, Chelsea, by 1809.

17. In the 1861 census William Arnold, breeches maker, is listed as residing and trading at no. 17 (PRO RG9/93/4-15); in 1868 a Mrs. Dodkin, private resident, is recorded as living there (*Kelly's London Directory* 1868 [n. pag.]).

18. For further details, see Whitehead, "New Information."

19. E 740.

20. This may strengthen Bentley's suggestion that there is a connection between the Enochs and Blake's lithograph *Enoch* (see BR(2) 750).

21. References to Enoch's bankruptcy in the press consistently use an alternative spelling of his surname: Enock. In addition, his business is described as that of "Tailor, Dealer and Chapman."

22. *London Gazette* 22 Jan. 1805: 118.

23. My thanks to Keri Davies for bringing this reference to my attention.

24. See *London Gazette* 9 Mar. 1805: 324.

25. *London Gazette* 14 May 1805: 665.

26. St. George's rates, 1805 (COWAC C598).



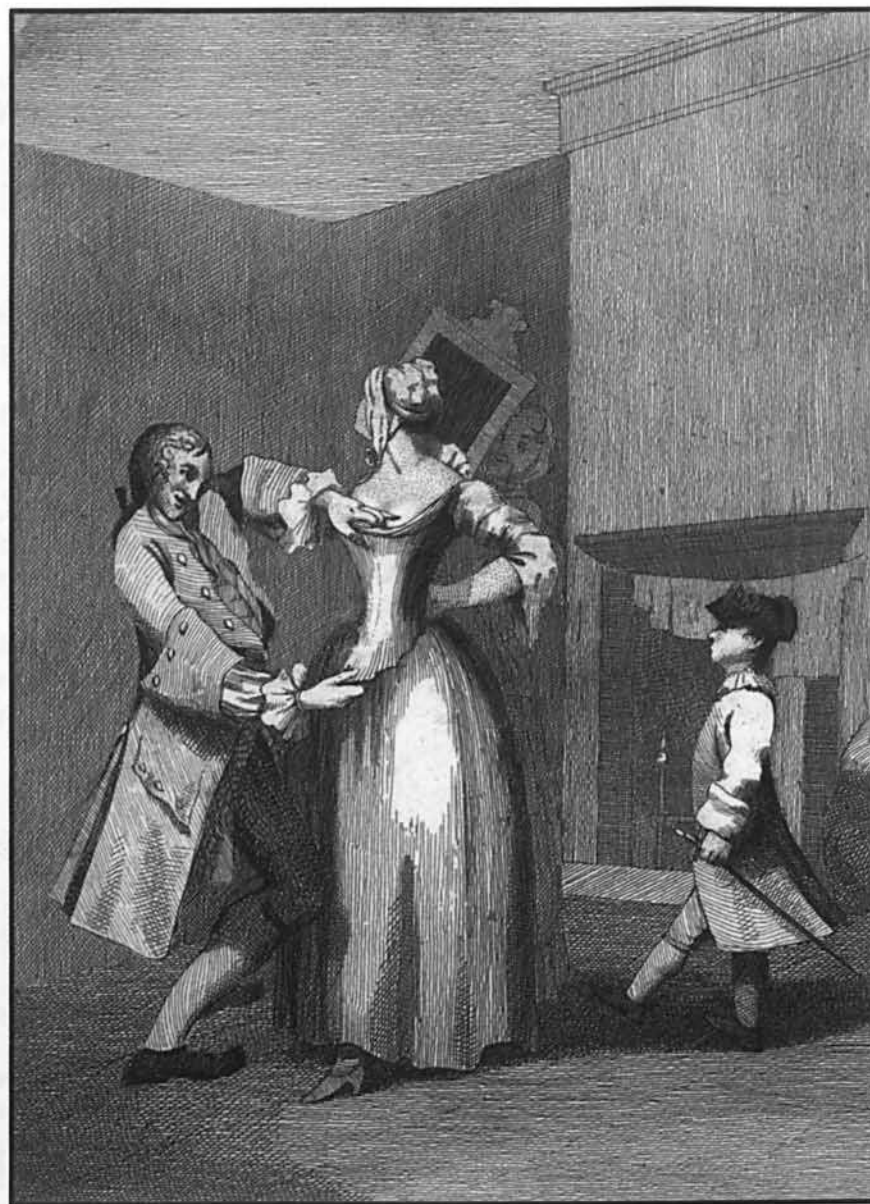
46)

	Rents	Poor and Highways	Watch	Pav. Cleans: Lighting	Total
Robt. Fluttersley	28	3. . . 8	. 7. .	. 14. .	4. 1. 8
Wm Spicer . . . .	28	3. . . 8	. 7. .	. 14. .	4. 1. 8
Wm Small . . . .	28	3. . . 8	. 7. .	. 14. .	4. 1. 8
W. A. Scripps . .	28	3. . . 8	. 7. .	. 14. .	4. 1. 8
Edw? Parish . . .	28	3. . . 8	. 7. .	. 14. .	4. 1. 8
Maria Radcliffe .	28	3. . . 8	. 7. .	. 14. .	4. 1. 8
Rich? May . . . .	40	4. 6. 8	. 10. .	1. . . .	5. 16. 8
Edm? Treherne . .	40	4. 6. 8	. 10. .	1. . . .	5. 16. 8
Wm Rowe . . . . .	40	4. 6. 8	. 10. .	1. . . .	5. 16. 8
Bynon Wilkinson	40	4. 6. 8	. 10. .	1. . . .	5. 16. 8
John Wilson . . .	40	4. 6. 8	. 10. .	1. . . .	5. 16. 8
Robt. Morgan . .	40	4. 6. 8	. 10. .	1. . . .	5. 16. 8
Arch? Newland . .	40	4. 6. 8	. 10. .	1. . . .	5. 16. 8
Martin & Stockhorn	44	4. 15. 4	. 11. .	1. 2. .	6. 8. 4
Fra <sup>d</sup> Tucker . . .	44	4. 15. 4	. 11. .	1. 2. .	6. 8. 4
Jos: Ward . . . .	44	4. 15. 4	. 11. .	1. 2. .	6. 8. 4
Grace Weightman	40	4. 6. 8	. 10. .	1. . . .	5. 16. 8
Eliz: Parvin . . .	44	4. 15. 4	. 11. .	1. 2. .	6. 8. 4
James Lay . . . .	44	4. 15. 4	. 11. .	1. 2. .	6. 8. 4
Benj: Bayfield . .	44	4. 15. 4	. 11. .	1. 2. .	6. 8. 4
		81. 9. 4	9. 8. .	18. 16. .	109. 13. 4

3. Entry for "Martin and Stockhorn" (sic); rate book for St. George's, Hanover Square, Brook Street Ward, March 1821 (City of Westminster Archives Centre, C617, p. 46).

# BLAKE

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY



"A Pair of Stays to mend the Shape / Of crooked Humpy Woman":  
Angus Whitehead Uncovers the Residents of 17 South Molton Street

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late as 1829<sup>27</sup> is problematic. Martin is indeed recorded as ratepayer for 1829;<sup>28</sup> however, in 1821, the year the Blakes are reported by Gilchrist to have moved to Fountain Court, the entry reads Martin and Stockham (illus. 3).<sup>29</sup> The entry is actually "Martin and Stockham," but from directory evidence it is clear that the name of the business was Martin and Stockham. Martin and Stockham are recorded as ratepayers for the property between 1821 and 1825.<sup>30</sup> In 1826 the name in the rate book reverts to Mark Martin and remains so until 1831, when Martin is crossed out and replaced by Charlotte Lohay.<sup>31</sup> After having retired to Paris c. 1821-26, Martin appears to have returned to live and work as a staymaker at no. 17 before March 1826. London commercial directories indicate that for the periods 1805-20/21 and 1826-30 "Mark Martin, Staymaker," and for the period 1821-25 "Martin & Stockham, staymakers," conducted business at no. 17.<sup>32</sup> This evidence confirms Ackroyd's suggestion that the Blakes lived above a commercial establishment, or at least lodged at a house that was also used as a commercial establishment: first Enoch's tailoring business, and then Martin's staymaking shop.

The change in ratepayer and business proprietor's name from Martin to Martin and Stockham c. 1821 suggests that, as Linnell claimed, Martin retired to France. However, his retention in the new name of the firm implies either that he remained a (silent?) partner of Stockham's or that Stockham agreed to take on his name.<sup>33</sup> This information is significant, as it appears to be the sole contemporary evidence to support Gilchrist's undocumented claim, followed by subsequent biographers, that the Blakes moved to Fountain Court, Strand, in 1821. However, Mark Martin's trade, rather than his lodgers, would have been his principal source of income;<sup>34</sup> its significance should be explored.

A staymaker made, fitted, and sold stays, essentially a laced underbodice or corset stiffened by the insertion of strips of whalebone (see cover illus.). R. Campbell, writing about 1747, observed that

The Stay-Maker ... ought to be a very polite Tradesman, as he approaches the Ladies so nearly; and possessed of a tolerable Share of Assurance and Command of Temper to approach their delicate Persons in fitting on their Stays, without being moved or put out of Countenance. He is obliged to inviolable Secrecy in many Instances, where he is obliged by Art to mend a crooked Shape, to bolster up a fallen Hip, or distorted Shoulder. ... After the Stays are stitched, and the Bone cut into thin Slices of equal Breadths and the proper Lengths, it is thrust in between the Rows of Stitching: This requires a good deal of Strength, and is by much the nicest Part of Stay Work; there is not above one Man in a Shop who can execute this Work, and he is either Master or Foreman, and has the best Wages. When the Stays are boned, they are loosely [*sic*] sewed together, and carried Home to the Lady to be fitted ....

This is a Species of the Taylor's Business, and rather the most ingenious Art belonging to the Mechanism of the Needle. The Masters have large Profits when they are paid ....<sup>35</sup>

Martin's shop, like all London shops of the period, probably kept long hours, possibly from 7.00 in the morning until 10.30 in the evening.<sup>36</sup> However, such a trade as staymaking in Mayfair was dependent upon the fashion seasons and seasonal work, with a discrepancy between a brisk time of full employment, pressure of too much work, and long hours during the London season from late November to July, and a slack time with little or no work from the end of the London season until late autumn.<sup>37</sup> Martin, like Blake, probably chose to trade in Mayfair for a reason, as explained by one of Blake's visitors at South Molton Street, Robert Southey.<sup>38</sup> About 1800 Southey wrote:

There is an imaginary line of demarcation which divides [Westminster and London] from each other. A nobleman would not be found by any accident to live in that part which is properly called the City ... whenever a person says that he lives at the West End of the Town, there is some degree of consequence connected with the situation: For instance, my tailor lives at the West End of the Town, and consequently he is supposed to make my coat in a better style of fashion: and this opinion is carried so far among the ladies, that if a cap was known to have come from the City, it would be given to

27. See also Lindsay 241n.

28. St. George's rates, 1829 (COWAC C626).

29. The relevant rate book is dated Mar. 1821 (COWAC C617). As stated above, Linnell suggests that the Blakes left South Molton Street on Martin's retirement, therefore probably in or perhaps sometime before Mar. 1821.

30. St. George's rates, 1825 (COWAC C622).

31. St. George's rates, 1831 (COWAC C629). Lohay was also a staymaker (see *Robson's Directory* 1833 [n. pag.]). Her father, Ambroise Lohay, is recorded as previously resident at no. 17 with Martin (*Robson's Directory* 1828-29 [1828] n. pag.).

32. See *Robson's Directory* 1822 (209) and 1823 (n. pag.) and *Pigot & Co's Directory* 1824 (153). In 1831, Charlotte Lohay's staymaking business is the sole trade recorded at no. 17.

33. Alternatively, Martin may have employed a relative to co-run the business in his absence.

34. "A tradesman in London ... expects to maintain his family by his trade, and not by his lodgers" (Adam Smith, quoted in Schwarz 325).

35. Campbell 224, 225-26. In 1737 Samuel Johnson had "take[n] humble lodgings with a staymaker named Richard Norris just off the Strand" (see Rogers). Blake's friend Tom Paine was a trained staymaker (Keane 30). Joseph Taylor, father of Blake's acquaintance Thomas Taylor the Platonist, was a staymaker at Round Court, St. Martin's-le-Grand (see Louth).

36. See George 206.

37. George 209, 263. One might draw a parallel between Martin's capricious schedule of work (ebbing and flowing according to the London season) and Blake's experiences as a commercial engraver during a period (post 1804) in which he appears to have been neglected in favor of the "softer" style of engravers such as Caroline Watson.

38. See *BR*(2) 310.



my lady's woman, who would give it to the cook, and she perhaps would think it prudent not to inquire into its pedigree.<sup>39</sup>

As most women wore stays or corsets of some form or another during this period, staymaking was a well-established and popular trade. Martin's business probably thrived particularly during the second half of the Blakes' residence at no. 17, as a change in fashion prompted a renewed demand for stays. In the 1790s many liberals had expressed reservations about the fashion: Anna Laetitia Barbauld condemned stays in her letter "Fashion, A Vision," published in the *Monthly Magazine* in April 1797, describing them as "the most common, and one of the worst instruments of torture, ... a small machine, armed with fish-bone and ribs of steel, wide at top, but extremely small at bottom. ... this detestable invention ...."<sup>40</sup> Frances Burney, visiting Paris in 1802, incredulously remarked "STAYS? every body has left off even corsets!"<sup>41</sup> Rousseau's tomb featured "a number of naked children burning women's whalebone stays."<sup>42</sup> Valerie Steele has observed that "throughout its history, the corset was widely perceived as an 'instrument of torture' and a major cause of ill health and even death. ... But the corset also had many positive connotations—of social status, self-discipline, artistry, respectability, beauty, youth, and erotic allure."<sup>43</sup> Steele recounts the reemergence of stays as a fashionable women's undergarment during the first decade and a half of the nineteenth century:

After a brief interregnum around 1800, the boned corset not only reappeared but spread throughout society. We might have expected that having once loosened their stays, women would never again wear corsets. Yet they did, in greater numbers than ever before. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in 1814 and 1815, the fashion for high-waisted "empire" gowns was waning. As the waistline on fashionable dresses began to drop to its normal position, skirts became fuller and boned corsets increasingly reappeared. Already by 1811, a writer for *The Mirror of the Graces* was predicting a return to tight-lacing, "Deformity once more drawing the steeled bodice [sic] upon the bruised ribs." The fashion for neoclassical dress and no stays was regarded, in retrospect, as having been part and parcel of the disorder and promiscuity of the Revolutionary era. For the next century, boned corsets were an essential component of women's fashion.<sup>44</sup>

Further evidence of the increasing popularity of stays is revealed by the fact that Martin appears to have experienced

competition from another staymaker's shop in South Molton Street from c. 1816 onwards.<sup>45</sup>

Some indication of the quality of Martin's Mayfair customers survives in the form of a bill (illus. 4) to the recently widowed Lady Augusta Leith, daughter of George, fifth earl of Granard, and widow of the late Lieutenant-General Sir James Leith.<sup>46</sup> Martin's bill suggests that he produced luxury corsets for the aristocracy and gentry. Numerous other fashionable female and possibly male Westminster residents must also have called at his shop. The three separate transactions may indicate that Lady Leith and her daughter were regular customers.

At the head of the bill is a copperplate intaglio engraving printed in black ink giving details of Martin's staymaking business.<sup>47</sup> The design is not stylistically distinctive, and there is no evidence that Blake ever produced such engraved tradesmen's bills.<sup>48</sup> However, it is also possible that Martin may have asked Blake to engrave and print this for him sometime before mid-February 1817. During this period the Blakes may have been glad of even such jobbing work. Details of Martin's trade and address are engraved in an egg- or oval-shaped border and surrounded by a simple brickwork design: "Martin, / STAYMAKER, / (From Paris) / N<sup>o</sup>. 17 South Molton Street, / Oxford Street, / LONDON. / Fait toutes Sortes de Corps et de Corsets a la Francoise." ("makes all manner of French-style stays [or bodices] and corsets"). Martin's use of the word "corps," which translates roughly as "bodice" or "stays," is of

45. Although he lodged in Charles Street, William Bridges (or Brydges) rented a ground floor for his staymaking shop at "34 South Moulton Street" from Robert Gould. See *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*: trial of John Williams for "burglariously breaking and entering the dwelling-house of William Brydges," 3 Apr. 1816, ref. t18160403-9, <<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?ref=t18160403-9>>. The address of his business is given in *Pigot & Co's Directory* 1823-24 (1823) 593. Brydges's shop, on the same side of the street as Martin's, would have been closer to the fashionable thoroughfare of Oxford Street at the heart of "the greatest Emporium in the known world" (national census [1801], quoted in Porter 123).

46. See Townend 1488 and Chichester. Sir James Leith of Leith Hall, Aberdeenshire, governor of Barbados and commander of the forces of the Windward and Leeward Islands, died of yellow fever in Barbados on 16 Oct. 1816. His will, written on the day he died and proved 27 Mar. 1817, left all his possessions to Lady Augusta and their children (PRO PROB 11/1590, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Will Registers, Effingham Quire Numbers: 106-66). His remains were interred in Westminster Abbey in Mar. 1817.

47. The rectangular platemark measures approximately 47 mm. x 65 mm.

48. The nearest surviving equivalents are Blake's engraving of an advertisement for Moore & Co. (1797) and the bookplate/calling card for George Cumberland (1827), far more ambitious projects with scope for Blake to exercise his own ideas (see BR(2) 819, 823). Therefore, it is likely that the stamp was engraved and printed for Martin by a professional writing engraver, such as William Staden Blake. However, the ink on the edge of the platemark on the top right and lower right corners might suggest that this was not the work of a general plate printer. No watermark is visible.

39. Quoted in Porter 118.

40. McCarthy and Kraft 287.

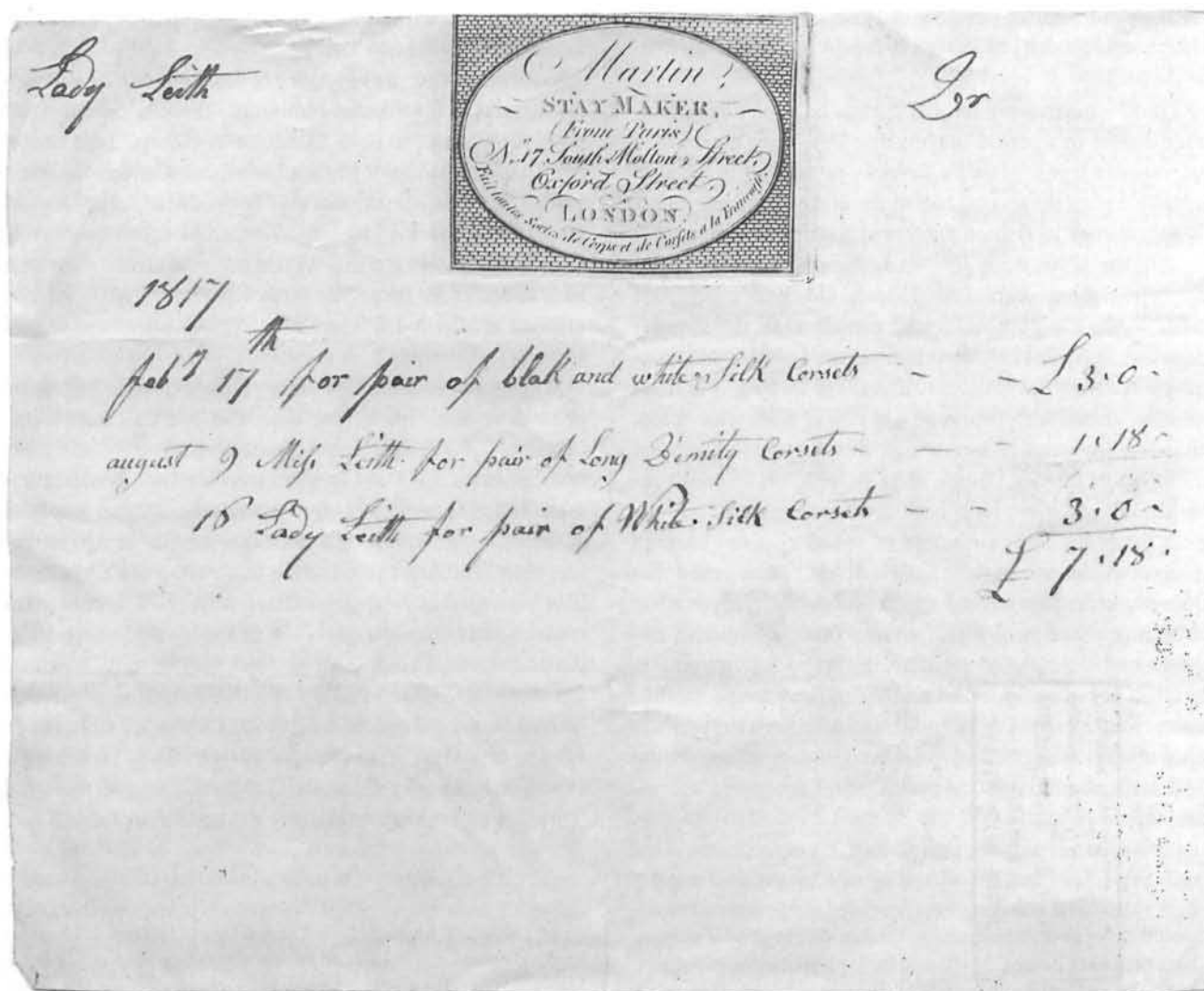
41. Quoted in Ribeiro 94.

42. Ribeiro 4.

43. Steele 1.

44. Steele 33.





4. Bill from Martin, staymaker, 17 South Molton Street, to Lady Leith (City of Westminster Archives Centre, Tilbury Papers, entry number Til/947).

Lady Leith

Dr [?]

1817

feb <sup>y</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	for pair of blak and white Silk Corsets	—	—	£ 3.0 -
august	9	Miss Leith for pair of Long Dimity Corsets	—	—	1.18 -
	16	Lady Leith for pair of White Silk Corsets	—	—	3.0 -
					£ 7.18.

I wish to thank Rory Lalwan for his assistance in tracing this document. It is clear from the bill that Martin had originally made it out for the first two corsets and then erased the original total, added the third purchase, and revised the total. On the verso "Lady Leith" is written in the same hand. Dimity, of which Miss Leith's pair of long corsets was made, is a cotton fabric woven with stripes or checks. Ian Chipperfield, an authority on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century staymaking (see the *Staymaker* web site <<http://www.thestaymaker.co.uk>>), has not hitherto encountered references to black corsets in this period. He observes that the color is impractical as the undergarment would show through the outer garments (e-mail, 20 July 2005). However, the color may be connected with Lady Leith's mourning for her husband and the burial of his remains at Westminster Abbey, which took place a few weeks after this purchase. A pair of corsets (as referred to in the bill) means in fact one corset, which was manufactured in two parts, later worn laced together.

interest. In her definitive history of the corset, Norah Waugh states that

at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Grecian figure—the natural figure (high rounded breasts, long well-rounded limbs)—was the ideal every woman hoped to attain. Her soft, light muslin dress clung to her body and showed every contour, so all superfluous undergarments which might spoil the silhouette were discarded—among them the boned stay. In France, where the social order had been completely overturned, with consequent loosening of morals and deportment, this fashion was more followed than in England. ... It is significant that in France the old name *corps* had quite disappeared, and from now on any tight-fitting body garment is known as a “corset”; a fashion that was copied in England though the old form “stays” was also retained.<sup>49</sup>

In April 1816 Ackermann's *Repository of Arts* noted:

We have been favoured with the sight of a new stay, the “corset des Grâces”, which we understand has received very distinguished patronage. This stay possesses the double advantage of improving the shape, and conducing towards the preservation of the health; no compression, no pushing the form out of its natural proportions; it allows the most perfect ease and freedom to every motion, while, at the same time, it gives that support to the frame, which delicate women find absolutely necessary.<sup>50</sup>

Such evidence suggests that, as the bottom had fallen out of the market for staymakers in the French capital, Martin may have migrated to London, where stays remained fashionable. This may have occurred c. 1800 (perhaps between the Treaty of Amiens of 25 March 1802 and Britain's declaration of war on 18 May 1803), certainly by March 1805, the date of Martin's first appearance in the rate books for no. 17.<sup>51</sup> In addition, the bill suggests that Martin's surname, and therefore the name of his business, was pronounced in the French rather than the English manner.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the new discovery helpfully supplements Linnell's claim that the reason for the Blakes' leaving South Molton Street was “his Landlord leaving off business & retiring to France.” It appears that by the spring of 1821 Martin was returning as well as retiring to France and very probably to Paris, his former residence, if not the city of his birth.

49. Waugh 75.

50. Quoted in Waugh 100.

51. According to Chipperfield, before the mid-1790s and after 1815 some London staymakers claimed to be French to attract a high-quality clientele (e-mail, 13 July 2005). However, of the numerous staymakers listed in London directories, few have French surnames. Two exceptions are Mes Dames Harman, 350 Oxford Street, and H. De Cleve, 5 Holywell Street, Strand (*Pigot & Co's Directory 1823-24* [1823] 222). I have found no evidence of another staymaker with a recognizably French surname trading in Mayfair c. 1790-1830.

52. However, evidence from Martin's marriage record suggests that he anglicized his name (see below). If this was the case, his surname may have been pronounced in the English manner.

At his shop Martin probably employed several assistants to attend customers in the ground-floor front room or to bone and sew stays and corsets in the back room. The basement may also have served as another workshop as well as store-room. Martin may have spent some time away from no. 17, calling upon genteel customers such as Lady Leith for a last fitting before their stays were finished at the shop. His business was just one of the numerous “brilliant and fashionable” shops in South Molton Street and the surrounding Mayfair streets selling luxury items.<sup>53</sup> These included John Bruckner, ladies' shoemaker, at no. 52, Heron and Jones, tailors, at no. 58, I. and J. Hunt, hatters, at no. 22, William Keith's china and Staffordshire warehouse at no. 44, James Lay, hatter, hosier, and glover, at no. 22, and Francis Perico, surgeon, apothecary, and midwife, at no. 29.<sup>54</sup> Such businesses substantiated the contemporary claim that in London, “the first city of the world,” “shops are unrivalled for splendour, as well as for their immense stocks of rich and elegant articles.”<sup>55</sup>

Martin's conducting a staymaker's business may also be pertinent in the light of two examples of Blake's minor verse from the period. Blake makes references to stays in annotations to his copy of volume one of *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1798). On pages xiv-xv of his introductory “Some Account of the Life and Writings of Sir Joshua Reynolds,” Edmond Malone quotes Reynolds describing how, on a visit to the Vatican, he was “disappointed and mortified at not finding [him]self enraptured with the works of [Raphael] ....”<sup>56</sup> Blake responds:

I am happy I cannot say that Rafael Ever was from my Earliest Childhood hidden from Me. I saw & I Knew immediately the difference between Rafael & Rubens

Some look. to see the sweet Outlines  
And beauteous Forms that Love does wear  
Some look. to find out Patches. Paint.  
Bracelets & Stays & Powderd Hair<sup>57</sup>

Here Blake appears to be criticizing Reynolds's evident inability to distinguish between Raphael's and Rubens's paintings.<sup>58</sup> However, in the fourth discourse, Blake also refers to stays in an annotation signaling approval of Reynolds's criticism of the Venetian school—Titian, but more particularly Paolo

53. See *Pigot & Co's Directory 1823-24* (1823) 15.

54. See Whitehead, “New Discoveries” 2: 326-30.

55. *Pigot & Co's Directory 1823-24* (1823) 15. In 1818 the *Ladies' Monthly Museum* featured two fashionable dresses, a ball dress and a walking dress, designed by a Miss Macdonald of no. 50, which was opposite no. 17 (*Ladies' Monthly Museum* Mar. 1818: 169-70). Perhaps Miss Macdonald was a relative of Ann and Christian MacDonald, wife and stepdaughter of John Lytrott.

56. Reynolds is alluding to Raphael's frescoes in the Stanze, which he encountered in 1750.

57. E 637. For Blake's unfavorable comparison of Rubens to Raphael, see E 513-14.

58. Elsewhere Blake comments that Reynolds's “Praise of Rafael is like the Hysteric Smile of Revenge” (E 642).

Veronese and Tintoretto. On page 98 Reynolds states, "it appears, that the principal attention of the Venetian painters, in the opinion of Michael Angelo, seemed to be engrossed by the study of colours, to the neglect of the *ideal beauty of form* ...."<sup>59</sup> On the opposite page, Blake writes:

If the Venetians Outline was Right his Shadows would destroy it & deform its appearance

A Pair of Stays to mend the Shape  
Of crooked Humpy Woman:  
Put on O Venus! now thou art,  
Quite a Venetian Roman.<sup>60</sup>

Blake's annotations of Reynolds have been dated c. 1798-1809 by David Erdman.<sup>61</sup> This overlaps the period in which the Blakes lived above Martin's staymaker's shop. However, there are problems with Erdman's dating. According to Bentley, "Blake's annotations to Reynolds were probably written at two distinct periods, perhaps first about 1801-2 and second in 1808-9."<sup>62</sup> The annotations referring to stays, written in ink at first glance, appear to date from the second period.<sup>63</sup> However, those on pages xiv and xv were first written in pencil and then overwritten in ink.<sup>64</sup> The underlying pencil may suggest that these annotations were part of the first round that Bentley dates to 1801-02, several years before Blake met Martin in late 1804-early 1805. But the dating of Blake's annotations to Reynolds remains imprecise and inconclusive. It is therefore possible that both references to stays date from 1805 on. Whether these references date from Blake's period of resi-

dence with Martin or not, the perpetual presence of stays, instruments which for Blake hid and distorted the naked female form, may have served as a regular reminder of the "seducing qualities" and "Vulgar Stupidity" of the Venetian school.<sup>65</sup>

### "A Frenchwoman"

Writing in 1927 of the Blakes' residence in South Molton Street, Margaret Irwin wondered, "what did the landlady at Number 17 think of 'them first floors'?"<sup>66</sup> Commenting upon Linnell's account of the "Landlord leaving off business & retiring to France," Bentley observes that

it is tempting to speculate whether Martin retired to France because his wife was French, and, if she was, whether Blake was referring to her when he said of his fresco of "The Last Judgment": "I spoiled that—made it darker; it was much finer, but a Frenchwoman here (a fellow lodger) didn't like it."<sup>67</sup>

Blake's statement derives from Gilchrist, who commented, "ill-advised, indeed, to alter *colour* at a fellow lodger and Frenchwoman's suggestion!"

The "Frenchwoman" may very well have been Martin's wife. A Mark Anthony Martin, widower, married Eleanor Larché, spinster, on Tuesday 20 May 1806 at St. Mary's Church, St. Marylebone Road (illus. 5).<sup>68</sup> The church, just two blocks north of Oxford Street, would have been, along with the parish church of St. George, Hanover Square, the nearest place of worship in which the inhabitants of South Molton Street could marry. The name Mark Martin appears rarely in contemporary directories or in the marriage registers of the two local churches. This point, coupled with the fact that this Mark Martin married a woman with a French surname, suggests that he and the Blakes' landlord are one and the same.

Although Martin was an extremely common name in France during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Larché was not. The name appears in genealogical records almost exclusively in the small town of Gignac, in the Hérault Valley in Languedoc. However, despite a search of the *International Genealogical Index* and church records held at the mairie in Gignac, the early life and subsequent history of

59. See Wark 66.

60. E 651. This annotation appears to have been influenced by two earlier passages in the fourth discourse. On page 90 Reynolds asserts that "Carlo Maratti [thought] that the disposition of drapery was a more difficult art than even that of drawing the human figure . . .," to which Blake responds, "I do not believe that Carlo Maratti thought so or that any body can think so. the Drapery is formed alone by the Shape of the Naked [next word cut away in binding]" (E 650). On page 95 Reynolds writes, "Such as suppose that the great style might happily be blended with the ornamental, that the simple, grave and majestic dignity of Raffaello could unite with the glow and bustle of a Paolo, or Tintoret, are totally mistaken," to which Blake responds, "What can be better Said. on this Subject? but Reynolds contradicts what he says Continually He makes little Concessions, that he may take Great Advantages" (E 651).

Blake appears to agree with Reynolds's view that trying to ally the Roman ideal form with the Venetian school's emphasis on costume is unsatisfactory. He plainly saw stays as an apposite image for the manipulation of the outline of the human form. It seems clear that he dislikes both stays and Venetian art for their immersion in and preoccupation with transient fashions rather than for any role they might have in idealization of form. Blake's verse satirizes what he considers the artificial, ephemeral, and therefore inferior nature of Venetian painting, and the impossibility of uniting this style with the grand Roman style.

61. See E 886.

62. Bentley, *Blake Books* [hereafter BB] 692.

63. See BB 693.

64. Bentley indicates that pencil is overwritten in ink on p. xv (BB 693), but Erdman claims that the ditty on that page is in ink only (E 637).

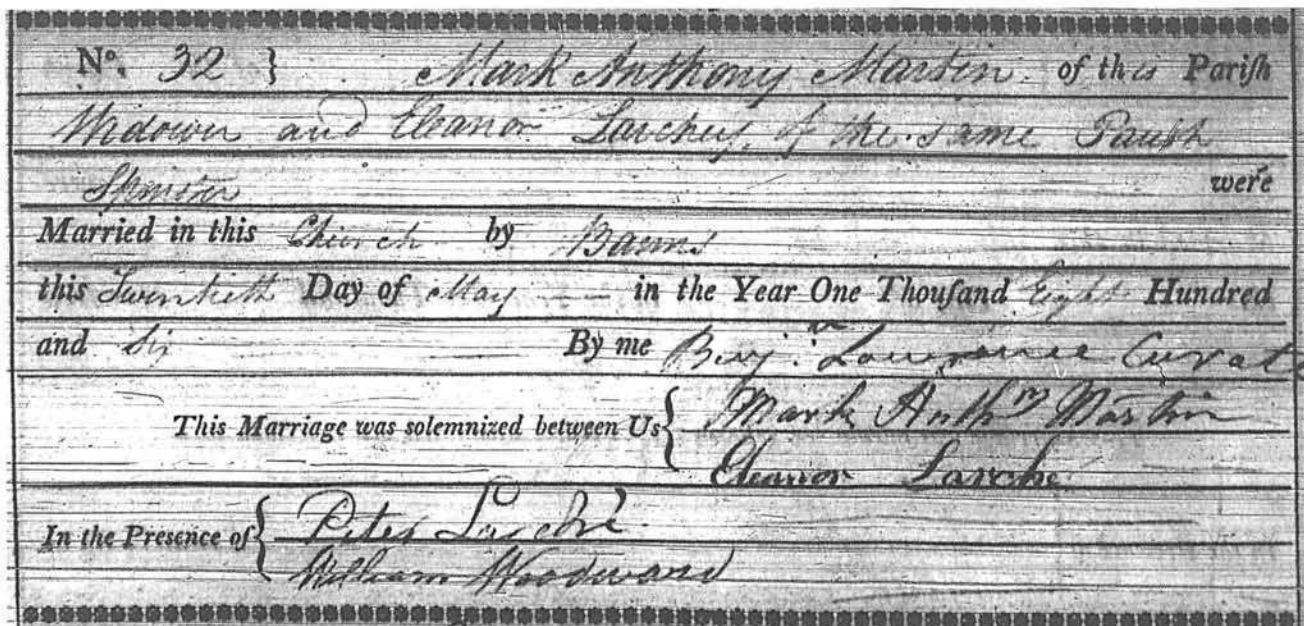
65. Wark 67; E 651. Women in stays or corsets feature in Blake's early engravings of designs by Thomas Stothard and others in the 1780s and early 1790s (see Essick, pls. 30, 32-34, 38, 39, 41, 43, 45, 54, 56, 103). However, in Blake's illuminated works, female figures appear naked (see *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* pl. 3), in transparent and form-revealing clothes (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* pl. 2), or in fashionable free-flowing empire gowns (*The Book of Thel* pls. 2 and 4). As Blake wrote in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "The nakedness of woman is the work of God" (E 36).

66. Irwin 15.

67. BB(2) 750, quoting Gilchrist 350. In a footnote Bentley argues that the Frenchwoman's advice was given before Apr. 1815, when George Cumberland, Jr., described *The Last Judgment* as "nearly as black as your Hat."

68. St. Mary's Church, parish of St. Marylebone, marriage register, vol. 131 (City of London, London Metropolitan Archives, and COWAC).





5. Entry for the marriage of Mark Martin and Eleanor Larché, St. Mary's Church, parish of St. Marylebone, marriage register, vol. 131 (courtesy of the City of London, London Metropolitan Archives, and the parish of St. Marylebone; image courtesy of the City of Westminster Archives Centre).

Eleanor Martin, née Larché, have yet to be recovered. William and Catherine Blake may have attended the wedding of their landlord of over a year and participated in the celebrations. To have given her opinion of *The Last Judgment*, Eleanor Martin must have entered the Blakes' front-room studio, viewed the work, presumably on the wall opposite the fireplace and adjoining no. 16, the only wall large enough to display it,<sup>69</sup> and discussed it with her lodger. Eleanor's visit and the fact that her comments prompted the revision of the painting suggest a cordial relationship between the Blakes and the Martins as well as Blake's apparent respect for her opinions.<sup>70</sup>

Although they were married according to the rites of the Church of England, still a statutory requirement in 1806, Eleanor and her husband appear to have been born in France and may have been of Huguenot descent. While the officiating curate, Benjamin Lawrence, anglicized her surname to Larchey on the marriage certificate, Eleanor retained the French spelling, Larché. In contrast her husband, probably baptized Marc Antoine Martin, seems to have anglicized his name. Among the Blakes' neighbors there appear to have been a number of other French people or individuals of French descent. These

included Louis Claude Augarde, a hairdresser and ratepayer at no. 3, E. Blondeel, embroiderer, at no. 52, James Mivart, haircutter and perfumer, at no. 5, Claude Olivier, merchant, at no. 10, L. S. O. Petit, also at no. 10, who about July 1806 composed, published, and sold from this residence *Observations sur les moyens de perfectionner la tournure des jeunes demoiselles* [*Observations on the Means of Improving the Shape and Carriage of Young Women*],<sup>71</sup> George Parvin, coal merchant, at no. 21, Frederick Fladong, wine merchant, at no. 28, John Perriot, gentleman and hotelier, at no. 1, Robert Sabine, haircutter and perfumer, at no. 41, and George Saffery, music teacher, at no. 63.<sup>72</sup> As noted above, some years after the Blakes' departure the staymaker Charlotte Lohay, daughter of the artisan painter Ambroise Lohay, succeeded Martin as ratepayer.<sup>73</sup>

71. The work was advertised in the *Morning Chronicle* of 2 July 1806. A copy survives in the British Library.

72. See Whitehead, "New Discoveries" 2: 323-27.

73. Catherine Blake, née Boucher, is likely to have been of French Huguenot descent (BR(2) 1-2), and Blake's brother James had been apprenticed to a Huguenot weaver, Gideon Boitout (BR(2) 11-12). As early as 1780, Blake, along with two fellow artists, was arrested as a suspected French spy near Chatham docks (Bentley, *Stranger* 58-60). Gilchrist wrote that to Blake in the early 1790s, "the French Revolution was the herald of the millennium, of a new age of light and reason. He courageously donned the famous symbol of liberty and equality—the *bonnet rouge*—in open day, and philosophically walked the streets with the same on his head" (Gilchrist 81). On 19 Oct. 1801, five months before the signing of the short-lived Peace of Amiens, and while residing in Felpham, Blake had written to John Flaxman observing that Felpham was as near to Paris as to London, and adding "I hope that France & England will henceforth be as One Country and their Arts One ..." (E 718). In 1803-04, during his trial for sedition and as fears of French invasion were growing in England, Blake and his wife were accused of voicing support for

69. See Whitehead, "New Discoveries" 1: 54.

70. Indeed, Eleanor may have had some artistic knowledge: it is likely that Peter Larché, a witness at their wedding, was a nearby gilder at 22 Rathbone Place (see *Holden's Triennial Directory* 1799 [415]). Interestingly, a William Martin, historical painter, lived at no. 17 in 1831, during the last months of Mark Martin's residence, or soon after his departure (see *London Gazette* 27 Dec. 1831: 2787, and 23 Aug. 1833: 1585); perhaps he was Martin's son. However, he may have been Norwich-born William Martin (1753-c. 1836), recorded as living in Marylebone in this period (see Fiske).



Blake's facility with languages was noted on more than one occasion. According to Gilchrist, "Blake, who had a natural aptitude for acquiring knowledge, little cultivated in youth, was always willing to apply himself to the vocabulary of a language, for the purpose of reading a great original author. He would declare that he learnt French, sufficient to read it, in a few weeks."<sup>74</sup> Bentley observes that "we know nothing else of his French except one use of it about 1808 in his Reynolds marginalia."<sup>75</sup> On the contents pages of Reynolds's *Works*, Blake transcribes several lines of Voltaire in French and comments upon them. The subject is Giovanni de Medici, Pope Leo X, the principal patron of Raphael. Hitherto this unique instance of Blake's written use of French has received little attention.

The Foundation of Empire is Art & Science Remove them or  
Degrade them & the Empire is No More—Empire follows Art  
& Not Vice Versa as Englishmen suppose  
On peut dire que la<sup>76</sup> Pape Léon X<sup>me</sup> en encourageant les  
Études donna les armes contre lui-même. J'ai ouï dire à un  
Seigneur Anglais qu'il avait vu une Lettre du Seigneur Polus,  
ou de La Pole, depuis Cardinal, à ce Pape; dans laquelle, en le  
félicitant sur ce qu'il étendait le progrès de Science en Europe,  
il l'avertissait qu'il était dangereux de rendre les hommes trop  
Savans—

VOLTAIRE *Moeurs de[s] Nation[s]*, Tome 4

O Englishmen! why are you still of this foolish Cardinals  
opinion?<sup>77</sup>

Napoleon. Private John Scofield claimed that Catherine said "altho she was but a Woman she wo<sup>d</sup>. fight as long as she had a Drop of Blood in her—to which the said Blake said, my Dear you wo<sup>d</sup>. not fight against France—she replied, no, I wo<sup>d</sup>. fight for Buonaparte as long as I am able" (BR(2) 160). Catherine is also recorded as having expressed pro-French sentiments to George Cumberland, Jr., at South Molton Street: in Apr. 1815, during the Hundred Days and six weeks before the battle of Waterloo, Catherine exclaimed, "if this Country does go to War our K—g ought to loose his head" (BR(2) 320). This remark has been interpreted as indicative of either Catherine's madness or of Blake's influence over her. Perhaps her impassioned utterance should be viewed in the context of the Blakes' having lodged for the past decade in the house of a couple of French descent in a neighborhood with a significant French presence. As such, her remarks might be interpreted as a desire for peaceful coexistence between England and France. Blake advocates peaceful coexistence with France in his annotations to Malone's preface to Reynolds's *Works* (E 641). A sympathetic reference to France can be found in *Jerusalem*, a work composed and created during Blake's residence at no. 17 (see *Jerusalem* 66:15, E 218).

74. Gilchrist 151.

75. BR(2) 400fn.

76. The grammatically correct "le" is transcribed in Bentley, *William Blake's Writings* 2: 1451.

77. E 636. The passage may be translated as:

You can say that Pope Leo X, by encouraging studying, gave weapons against himself. I have heard an English gentleman say that he had seen a letter from Seigneur Polus, or Seigneur de La Pole [Reginald Pole (1500-58), cardinal and archbishop of Canterbury], who has since been made a Cardinal, to that Pope; in which, even as he congratulated him because he was extending the progress of

Blake is referring to *Essay sur l'histoire générale, et sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations, depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à nos jours*.<sup>78</sup> There is no evidence of Blake's owning this work.<sup>79</sup> Is it possible that he borrowed it from the library of his Parisian landlord? *Essay sur l'histoire générale* is not written in the most straightforward French. Blake therefore may have been grateful for the assistance of native French speakers, as Mark and Eleanor Martin presumably were, in understanding this passage.<sup>80</sup> The Martins may have also assisted Blake's "learn[ing] French, sufficient to read it, in a few weeks."<sup>81</sup>

The findings discussed in this paper suggest a far more differentiated picture of life at South Molton Street over the almost two decades of William and Catherine Blake's residence than has been previously realized. In earlier discussions of the inhabitants of South Molton Street, Mark Martin, "M<sup>r</sup> Enoch" and "a Frenchwoman," though said to have been fellow lodgers of the Blakes, were little more than unrelated names. We can now begin to identify these fellow inhabitants, their relationship to one another, and the years they shared no. 17 with the Blakes. We can better imagine the relationships between William and Catherine and a number of their neighbors and fellow inhabitants—those who peopled their domestic universe. I hope that I have suggested how these discoveries enhance our knowledge of the Blakes during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, a period for which records relating to them are virtually nonexistent.

science in Europe, he warned him that it was dangerous to make men too knowledgeable.

Blake also refers to this incident in an annotation to the first discourse (E 642). During 1800-03 Blake had included a portrait of Voltaire in his "heads of poets" series to decorate Hayley's library at Felpham (see BR(2) 92).

78. The work was translated as *An Essay on Universal History, the Manners, and Spirit of Nations, from the Reign of Charlemagne to the Age of Lewis XIV* (London: J. Nourse, 1759).

79. Bentley includes no reference to the work in BB or *Blake Books Supplement*.

80. There are parallels here with Blake's apparent problems with Italian in Alessandro Vellutello's sixteenth-century edition of Dante during the creation of his illustrations to *The Divine Comedy*, as discussed in Paley 111-12.

81. Living with two native speakers would certainly have facilitated his progress. Blake's knowledge of French may lie behind Henry Crabb Robinson's conversation with him on 18 Feb. 1826 (approximately five years after he had parted company with the Martins) concerning his frequent "intercourse with Voltaire": "I asked in what langu<sup>e</sup>. Voltaire spoke[;] [Blake] gave an ingenious answer—"["To my Sensations it was English—it was like the touch of a musical key—He touched it probably French, but to my ear it became English["] (BR(2) 434). Blake may also have learned some French while a neighbor of Hayley's at Felpham, 1800-03.

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