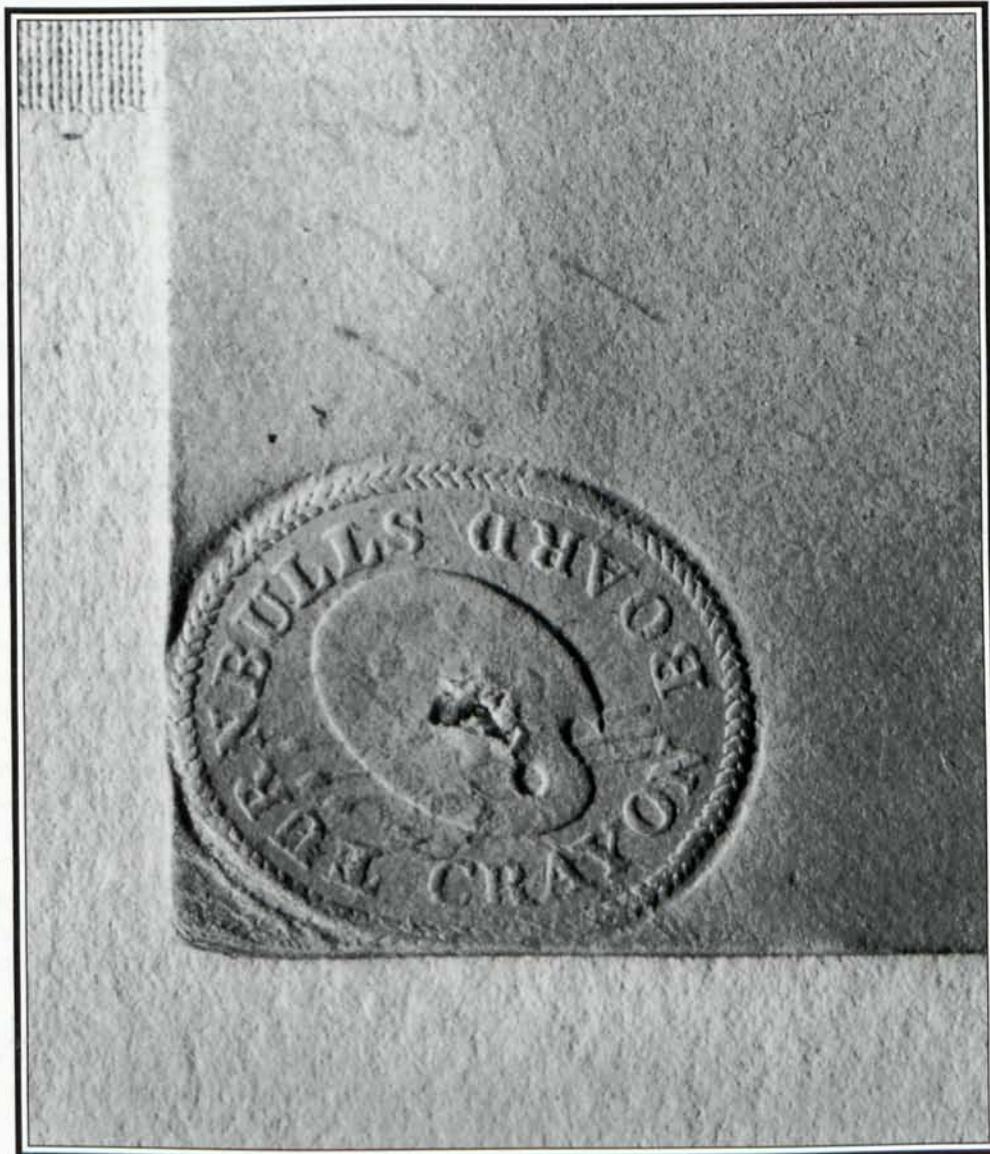


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C O N T E N T S

Article

Blake in the Marketplace 1852: Thomas Butts, Jr.
and Other Unknown Nineteenth-Century
Blake Collectors
by Joseph Viscomi 40

Newsletter

*Romanticism on the Net, Blake's Web Page,
To Bring Them to Perfection Has Caused
This Delay (E 745)* 71

Review

Harvey Birenbaum, *Between Blake and Nietzsche:
The Reality of Culture*
Reviewed by Stephen Clark 68

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: "Turnbull's Crayon Board." Blind embossed stamp in the mount of *The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea*, c. 1803-05.

Blake in the Marketplace 1852:
Thomas Butts, Jr. and Other Unknown
Nineteenth-Century Blake Collectors

BY JOSEPH VISCOMI

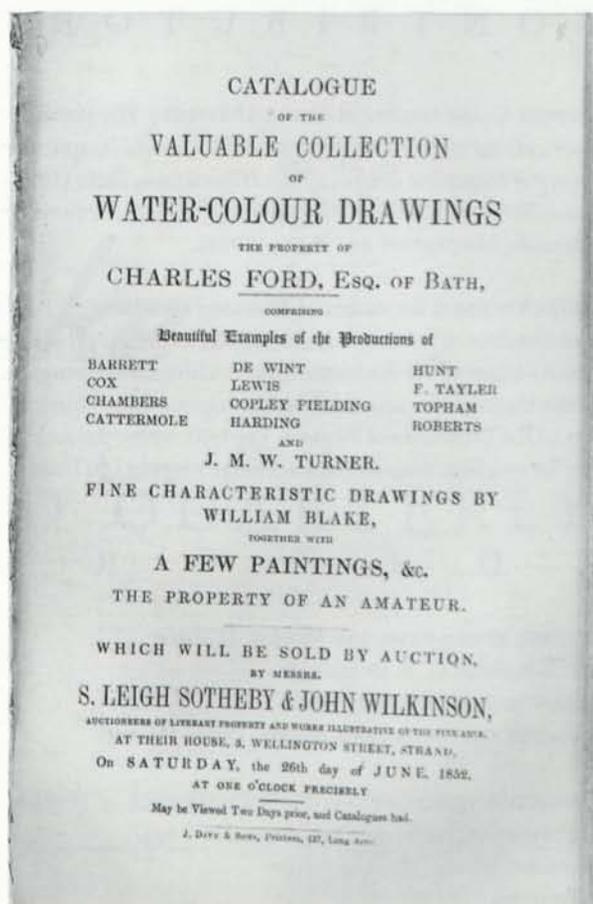
The interest attaching to the great collection of Blake's works formed by his almost solitary purchaser, Mr. Butts, has induced me to specify which were once his, even in the instances where they have passed out of the family. In some cases, the owners have not been traced: in others, the imputed ownership has probably ceased to be correct.

W. M. Rossetti, in Alexander Gilchrist's *The Life of William Blake* (2: 199)¹

In 1968, while compiling his magnificent catalogue raisonné of Blake's paintings and drawings, Martin Butlin appealed "for help over an untraced catalogue for a sale of works from the Butts collection" ("William Rossetti" 39). This, the largest Blake collection ever formed, was assembled by Thomas Butts, one of Blake's most important patrons, probably between c. 1799 and c. 1810, and between c. 1820 and c. 1827. It consisted of over 200 biblical temperas and watercolors, Milton illustrations, color-print drawings, illuminated books, illustrated books, and engravings. Butts never catalogued the collection, but because most of it was dispersed through auctions, beginning in 1852 with an auction attributed to Butts Jr. (Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* p. 336, hereafter referred to as Butlin; numbers are catalogue entries unless preceded by a "p"), its general make-up can be reconstructed through sale catalogues. By knowing its contents, we can trace the provenances of individual works, gauge Blake's productivity at specific periods in his life, and estimate the extent of Butts's patronage. Thus, the possible loss of a sale catalogue is disturbing. The collection may have been larger than previously thought, and the provenances of works not formerly connected to Butts may need to be altered. Furthermore, dispersal of the collection may have begun earlier than 1852 and undertaken by someone other than Butts Jr. Indeed, if a sale with Blakes from the Butts collection is found whose vendor is not Butts Jr. or another member of the Butts family, then Blake's first audience was a little larger than we re-

I am very grateful to Martin Butlin and Robert Essick for reading early drafts of this article and for their many helpful suggestions.

¹William Michael Rossetti's lists are in the second volume of Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* (1863). They are here referred to as Rossetti, followed by page and entry numbers.



1 Title page, Sotheby's sale catalogue for Charles Ford's collection, 26 June 1852.

alize, consisting of collectors possibly unknown to us, and the dispersal of the Butts collection may not only have occurred earlier than previously thought but have also occurred through avenues other than auctions.

Butlin infers an untraced Butts sale from comments made by William Michael Rossetti in his, the first, catalogue raisonné of Blake's works (Butlin 472). Rossetti states that six biblical watercolors and three illustrations to *Paradise Lost* (1808) were acquired by a "Mr. Fuller, from Mr. Butts," and he quotes descriptions of these works "from the Sale-catalogue." For example, Rossetti records the provenance of *He Cast Him into the Bottomless Pit* as "Mr. Fuller, from Mr. Butts" and states that it is "Described in the Sale-catalogue as 'very powerful and characteristic'" (229, #174). No known sale contains this work, a buyer named Fuller, or a similar description. Butlin, forced to conclude that a sale is untraced, records the early provenance of this work as: "Thomas Butts; Thomas Butts jun., untraced sale; Fuller by 1863. . . ."² Rossetti records each of Fuller's nine purchases in the same

² Butlin 524. The other Fuller purchases are similarly recorded (see Butlin 195, 513, 519, 521, 522, and 536.1, 2, 10).

way, quoting descriptions and/or titles from the "Sale-catalogue" and nothing more, which implies not only an untraced Butts auction took place but also that Rossetti had not seen the drawings themselves, that he was relying on an annotated sale catalogue or a transcript for information.³

Looking through auction catalogues in search of something else, I recently found the "untraced sale," but, as is often the case, the discovery raises more questions than it answers. The auction was of drawings, watercolors, and paintings and was held at Sotheby's on 26 June 1852. The "Fuller" recorded as buyer was almost certainly either Joseph or Samuel, brothers who were well-known print dealers in London between 1808 and 1862. They frequently attended auctions and may have been buying for H. A. J. Munro, who sold all nine works at Christie's on 22-24 April 1868. Rossetti implies that Fuller still retained ownership in 1863, but the works were probably Munro's by that time, since the Fullers sold their stock of prints and drawings in 1862.⁴ In addition to Fuller's nine acquisitions, the June 1852 auction included 17 other biblical watercolors, three other 1808 *Paradise Lost* illustrations, and two other works by Blake that may have been prints or sketches (see Appendix 1 for an annotated list of the Blakes in this sale). According to the title page of the sale catalogue (illus. 1), the primary vendor was "Charles Ford of Bath" (1801-70), who was probably the miniaturist who lived and worked in Bath. According to Graves, he exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1830 and 1856 (*Dictionary* 2: 136). He is not listed in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, in any book on Blake, or in books on British watercolorists, but is mentioned in a few reference works in art history (like Thieme-Becker and E. Benezit) and a few works on British miniaturists, one of which succinctly notes that "little is known about him. He was in his day one of the principal miniaturists at Bath. He may possibly have been related to Charles Ford, an ironmonger" (Long 156). Foskett adds a little more: "according to O'Brien [he]

³ Rossetti does the same with works from the 26-27 March 1852 sale that he had not examined. They are recorded as coming "from Mr. Butts" and their descriptions as coming "from the Sale-catalogue." For example, lot 148 of this sale is "*The Covenant*, very fine," which Rossetti records as: "*The Covenant*. [From Mr. Butts.] Described in the Sale-catalogue as 'very fine'" (231, #193). Items recorded simply as coming "from Mr. Butts" were often not given a present owner, presumably because Rossetti was unaware of their locations in 1863.

⁴ In *Kelley's Postal Directory* for 1852, they are listed as "printsellers, publishers, and preparers of superfine watercolors [sic]" and were located at 34 and 35 Rathbone Place. A steel engraving of their shop is reproduced among the directory's advertisements. The "Fuller" at the Ford auction is most likely the printseller, as is indicated by his purchase of lot 59: "D. Roberts, R. A. The bull Ring at Seville, engraved, very fine," for £8 10s., the second highest price paid for an item at the auction, and his only other purchase besides the Blakes. The "Extensive, Interesting, and Valuable Collection of Modern Engravings, and Illustrated Books, principally the Stock of Messrs. Fuller (sold in consequence of the retirement of the senior partner)" was auctioned at Southgate and Barrett on 3-12 November 1862. No Blakes were listed.

was a pupil and friend of Sir Thomas Lawrence" (275).⁵ Ford collected primarily the works of painters from his own generation and the one immediately preceding his, including Richard Parkes Bonington, David Cox, Peter De Wint, J. F. Lewis, George Chambers, A. V. Copley Fielding, James Harding, John Martin, David Roberts, and David Wilkie.⁶ Of Blake's generation, Ford collected J. M. W. Turner, Joshua Cristall, Robert Hills, George Barrett, and Thomas Gainsborough.⁷ But did he collect William Blake?

Included in the auction was "The Property of an Amateur," a very common appellation. Theoretically, the Amateur may have owned the Blakes, in which case the Amateur may have been Butts Jr. The problem here is that Blake's 29 watercolors were sold in lots 155 through 182x, which appears to place them among Ford's collection (lots 1-194, as I hope to demonstrate). And yet, assuming that Ford was

⁵ A miniaturist painter named J. E. Ford lived in London at 15 Camomile Street, Bishopsgate, according to the *Wakefield [Postal] Directory* of 1794. The most famous Ford of Bath was Ann Ford, who married Phillip Thicknesse. Whether Charles Ford was a relative of either family is not known; he may have been the son or descendant of John Ford of Bath, a "Miniature Painter etc." who exhibited at the Free Society of Artists in 1764, 1774, 1775, 1776 (Graves, *Society*).

Linnell records in his journal for 8 May 1820: to "Mr Wyatt. with Mr Blake / To Lady Ford—saw her Pictures" (Bentley, *Blake Records Supplement* 104). According to *Fraser's Magazine* 58 (July to December 1858), Lady Ford (the daughter of Benjamin Booth, a great collector of Wilson) had two children, Richard, the critic and collector, who was the oldest, and James, a prebendary (423). Richard Brinsley Ford, a descendant, informs me that he knows of no one in his family to have collected Blake (private correspondence).

"O'Brien" is D. O'Brien, who wrote *Miniatures in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London, 1951). Both Long (156) and Foskett (275) state that Charles Ford was "an associate of Wordsworth and Hannah More." No work on Wordsworth—biographies, chronologies, or letters—mentions him and no portrait by him of the poet is known, but Wordsworth had visited Bath for several weeks in April 1839, in April and May 1841, and in March 1847 (*Selincourt* 3: 672-690; 4: 189-198; 4: 835-841).

A "Ford" was at the Sotheby auction of Robert Balmanno, on 3 May 1830, and bought three prints after Lawrence's portraits. A "Ford" bought lot 178 at the 29 April 1862 auction at Sotheby's, which consisted of eight Blake drawings and sketches (Butlin 345, 349, 350, and five unidentified works). A "Ford" bought Constable's *Hadleigh Castle, a distant view*, c. 1829, at Foster's on 17 May 1860 (*Reynolds* 2: 29.6).

⁶ Ford collected over 90 sketches and watercolors by Robert Hills (1769-1844), and also seems to have been especially interested in the works of William Henry Hunt (1790-1864), Edward Duncan (1803-82), and F. W. Topham (1808-77).

⁷ Ford has been overlooked by Turner scholars as well as by Blakeans. He owned "Kenilworth Castle, a fine drawing" (lot 67), which sold to W. Evans for £4 8s., and "Sands at Hastings, effect of sunset, with numerous Boats and Figures—*admirably drawn*" (lot 194), which sold to J. Wilkenson for L2 4s. Wilton records the provenance of the first Turner as Thomas Griffith (1833); John Ruskin; Munro sale Christie's 2 June 1877 (398, #842). Apparently, Ford owned it before Ruskin, who probably bought it from the dealer Evans. Wilton records the provenance of the second as "presented by Turner to Sir Anthony Carlisle, his doctor; Joseph Gillott, sale Christie's 4 May 1872, now untraced" (358, #510). Apparently Ford came between Carlisle and Gillott.

The Auctions

George Cumberland	6 May 1835	Christie's
Anonymous and Thomas Moule	26-27 March 1852	Sotheby's
Charles Ford and Anonymous	26 June 1852	Sotheby's
E. V. Utterson and others	5 July 1852	Sotheby's
Thomas Butts	29 June 1853	Foster
Thomas Butts and others	8 March 1854	Foster
Captain Frederick Butts	24 June 1903	Sotheby's

the collector is equally problematic, because at least four of the titles are recorded in receipts between Blake and Butts, and most of the others belong to the same biblical series as these. Did Blake have a patron co-extant with Butts, acquiring works from the same series? Complicating things further is the presence of Butts Jr. at the auction. He is recorded in the British Library's annotated catalogue of the sale as a *buyer*, not a seller, acquiring 19 of the Blake watercolors. Eighteen of these he put up for auction a year later, on 29 June 1853 at Foster and Son. Because the Ford auction was unknown, Butts Jr.'s acquisitions—if that is what they are—appeared, like all the other Blakes in the 1853 sale, to have entered the Butts collection directly from Blake and without intermediate owners. Was Butts Jr. at the Ford auction *buying* in Blakes that failed to sell or meet their reserve, the lowest price acceptable to the vendor, or was he *buying*? *Vendor* or *collector*, that is the question.

My attempt to answer this question has resulted in two interrelated articles. The forthcoming "A 'Green House' for Butts? New Information on Thomas Butts, his Residences, and Family" demonstrates that Butts's family was far more extended and diverse than previously recognized, and it identifies the most likely moments when Blakes may have left the collection and the family members responsible for their departure. Like "Green House," the present article means to challenge the idea that Butts Jr. inherited the Blake collection in its entirety and was solely responsible for its mid-nineteenth century dispersal—and thus for the enormous increase in Blake's visibility and reputation that led in 1854 to Gilchrist's desire to learn and write about Blake. By challenging the premise that Butts Jr. was necessarily the vendor of the first auctions in which Blakes from his father's collection sold, I am also arguing against the hypothesis that Butts Jr. was the vendor of the first important Blake sale, that of 26-27 March 1852. In arguing that the March and June sales are traces of earlier dispersals of Blakes from the Butts collection, I am suggesting that more collectors were interested in Blake than we realize and that the 1852 sales reveal and helped to create a market for Blake, which in turn may have prompted Butts Jr. to sell most of his collection in June 1853. By examining and contrasting the auctions reputed and known to be Butts Jr.'s, I hope also to shed new light on

Butts as patron and collector, on Butts Jr. and his attitude toward Blake, and on Blake's original mounting style for the biblical watercolors. And, finally, new information about the provenance of Butts's copy of *Comus*, combined with an examination of the style in which it and the other c. 1816 Milton illustrations were executed (i.e., *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*), suggests that these works may not have been commissioned by Butts.

Thomas Butts as Collector and Butts Jr.'s Auctions

According to Gilchrist, "for nearly thirty years [Butts] continued (with few interruptions) a steady buyer at moderate prices of Blake's drawings, temperas, and frescoes; the only large buyer the artist ever had. Occasionally he would take of Blake a drawing a week . . . As years rolled by, Mr. Butts' house in Fitzroy Square became a perfect Blake Gallery" (1: 115). Bentley states that "His house gradually filled to overflowing with Blake's pictures, until some must have had to be taken down to make room for new ones as they appeared" ("Butts" 1065), and that Butts filled "his house to overflowing with pictures and books" (*Blake Records* 175). The idea of Butts's house overflowing with Blakes is questionable because he appears to have owned a house in Dalston until 1808 and owned 16 houses when he died in 1845 (see "Green House"). Moreover, the hypothesis is inferred from the number of Blakes he owned, not from descriptions. Butts died in 1845, at which time his house at 17 Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square, was inherited by Thomas Butts Jr. Gilchrist never saw the house, which was vacated in 1853, a year before he had heard of Blake and began the biography; nor is there any record of correspondence between Butts Jr. and the Gilchrists or the Rossettis. When the biography was being written, Butts Jr. lived at 20 Chester Terrace, Regent Park, which was about five blocks north of Fitzroy Square.⁸ He died there on 14 December 1862 (*Burke's*). The Rossettis knew Butts Jr.'s son, Captain Frederick Butts, through whom they were able to examine what remained of the Blake collection, the watercolors and temperas that failed to sell in Butts Jr.'s auctions, and nine color-print drawings and other works never before put up for auction.⁹

As startling as it seems, there are no first-hand descriptions of the Blake collection as owned by Butts, no cata-

⁸ The Chester Terrace address is given in Butts Jr.'s will, which was written on 25 August 1862 and proved on 17 February 1863. It is four numbered pages and is in Somerset House. Why Butts Jr. was not consulted by the Gilchrists or Rossettis is unknown. The only mention of Thomas Butts Jr. in the *Life* concerns his selling the Job watercolors to Milnes (Gilchrist 1: 282).

⁹ Dante G. Rossetti records that he and his brother visited Captain Butts on 15 January 1863, but he does not record where (*Letters of DGR* 469, 471-72). Presumably, it was the Chester Terrace residence. Butts Jr. bequeathed his art collection to his son and daughter "in equal shares," but the will had not yet been proved (see n8).

logue of what Butts Jr. inherited, and no descriptions of what Butts Jr. displayed in the Fitzroy Square house once he owned it—or what he might have had in his own house at 5 Upper Street, Fitzroy Square, where he lived from c. 1830 to 1845 and which belonged to his father (Butts Sr.'s Will p. 6).¹⁰ Linnell's awareness of the Book of Job watercolors suggests that he and Blake visited Butts in September 1821, but there is no description of what Linnell saw. Tatham had seen Butts's Blake collection, but describes it merely as "splendid" and notes that he "has seen pictures" (i.e., temperas) "that have appeared exactly like the old cabinet pictures" of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Palmer had hoped to make such a visit but did not: "Dear Mr. Blake promised to take me himself to see Mr. Butts's collection—but alas! it never came off." And Seymour Kirkup, who was a childhood school friend of Thomas Butts Jr. and states that he spent much time with him from "1810 to 1816," did visit often but records only that he "neglected sadly the opportunities the Buttses threw in [his] way," adding, though, that "They (Butts) did not seem to value him as we do now" (Bentley, *Blake Records* 274, 517, 515, 300, 221, 220n2).

Butts is not known to have had an auction, but his son is thought to have had three: on 26-27 March 1852 at Sotheby's, on 29 June 1853 at Foster and Son, and on 8 March 1854 at Foster and Son. The Blakes in this last auction, however, had been put up for sale the year before but bought in. Only two were sold in the 1854 sale, while the rest were inherited by Captain Butts, along with most of the Blakes that were never put up for sale.¹¹ These mid-nineteenth-century auctions were crucial in establishing Blake's audience and market. The March 1852 sale was not the first to include Blake watercolors (see below), but it was the most important: it was the first to include Blakes from the Butts collection and the first to include both a substantial number and a diverse selection of Blake's works. Illuminated books, illustrated books, and watercolors were sold as part of a "Valuable Col-

¹⁰ Butts Sr.'s will is 15 unnumbered pages, which, for convenience, are here numbered. It is in the Public Records Office, Chancery Lane. He owned 15 houses and a farm when he died; he bequeathed the leases to the Grafton and Fitzroy Street residences to Butts Jr.

¹¹ Captain Butts had an auction at Sotheby's on 24 June 1903. Works bought in and works not then put up for sale were sold privately by the Captain's widow in 1906, mostly through Carfax to W. Graham Robertson, to pay the death taxes (Butts 162-5). Two other auctions, at Sotheby's on 21-23 March 1910 and 19 December 1932, included a few minor items from the Butts family connected to Blake, while an auction at Puttick and Simpson on 2 July 1937 included prints by Butts Jr. The 1910 auction included copper plates and prints by Butts Jr., and a "working cabinet" that held the plates and engraving tools (see Essick, *Separate Plates* 211-26). Two copies of *The Book of Job* engravings also sold in this auction, though these did not necessarily belong to Butts. The 1932 auction included Blake's three miniatures of Butts, Mrs. Butts, and Butts Jr. painted on ivory, Mrs. Butts's needlework and tea pot, and a receipt signed by Blake. They belonged to Anthony Bacon Drury Butts, the Captain's son (and great grandson of Butts).

lection of Engravings & Drawings from the Portfolio of An Amateur." This two-day sale of over 1500 items in 351 lots (lots 1-349, plus two lots penciled in in the British Library's annotated copy) included original and reproductive engravings (almost exclusively proofs and early states) by and after Durer, Hogarth, Rembrandt, Turner, Wilkie, and many others, "Drawings by the Old Masters" (89-105), "Modern Drawings in Water Colour" (106-44), "Engraved Illustrations to Popular Works" (187-221), "Portraits" (222-29), "Landscapes" (230-39), "English Engravings" (252-90), and "Works of the Late J. M. W. Turner, Esq., Chiefly Engraver's Proofs" (291-316). Turner's prints appear to have been collected assiduously, with about 70 prints and three watercolors in the auction.¹²

The Blakes in this "Valuable Collection" were announced on the title page of the 1852 sale catalogue as the "Works of that Able but Eccentric Artist, William Blake, with Many of his Best Drawings." They were placed under two headings. The first, "Works of William Blake" (lots 50-61), consisted of 10 illuminated books, two copies of *Night Thoughts*, a copy of Blair's *The Grave*, and a set of *Book of Job* engravings. The second, "Original Drawings, in Colours, By William Blake" (lots 147-67), consisted of 18 biblical watercolors, *Queen Catherine's Vision* (1807), and the six designs to Milton's *Nativity* (c. 1816). The auction's vendor is anonymous, recorded only as "Amateur"; Lugt identifies the *provenance*, not the vendor, as Thomas Butts (#20723), which is clearly inferred from the fact that the Blakes (though not necessarily all of them) once belonged to Butts and are the most easily traced works in the auction. Sotheby's own records do not identify the "Amateur."¹³ Indeed, as will become apparent, nothing except his father's Blakes connects this Sotheby auction with Butts Jr., and nothing at all connects it to the auction in June 1853 at Foster and Son, the only auction whose catalogue identifies Butts Jr. as the vendor.

Before we can ascertain whether the "Amateur" was or was not Butts Jr., we need first to examine the conventions of auctions and the make-up of the particular collection sold. We can be relatively sure that if the Blakes belonged to Butts Jr. in March 1852, then so did the non-Blake items. Auctions consisting of works from various collections announce

¹² The three Turner watercolors are presumably the most traceable of the auction's works, but they yield no information on the identity of the vendor. The watercolors were: "View of the Cross at Winchester" (144), "View of Sheffield" (145), and "View of the Crypt at Kerkstall Abbey" (146); they sold for £5 to Hogarth, £2 3s. to Palser, and £7 7s. to Evans respectively. All three buyers were dealers, and none recorded the person from whom he acquired the work, which, Butlin assures me privately, would not have been expected of them. Wilton records their first owners as J. E. Taylor, Ruskin, and Taylor respectively (see 317, #164; 312, #102; and 325, #235). Butts is not recorded as having owned any Turners.

¹³ I am grateful to Henry Wemyss of Sotheby's in London for checking the master records, which unfortunately do not go back this far.

that fact on the title page (e.g., the one on 20 June 1853 at Sotheby's, "Catalogue of a Valuable Assemblage of Water-Colour Drawings, from the Portfolios of Several Distinguished Collections"); or they introduce secondary vendors with phrases such as "together with" and "to which is added." Or they mention the secondary vendors in the catalogue itself, introducing lots with separate headings, such as "Another Property," or "The Property of a Gentleman." The March 1852 auction that was supposedly Butts Jr.'s did include works from another collection, but this fact is clearly stated on the title page: "Together with the Collection formed by the late Thomas Moule" (lots 350-420x).¹⁴ For the sake of accounting, if not also provenance, these subheadings are necessary. It appears, then, that the 1500 plus items that sold in lots 1-349 belonged to a single vendor, the "Amateur." If the "Amateur" was Butts Jr., then either he and/or his father formed the collection sold.

Rossetti lists only the Blakes in the Butts collection, and so Butts's collection appears synonymous with Blake. Is this a major distortion of the eclecticism of a lifetime of collecting, or is it an accurate reflection? I suspect the latter, because the collector responsible for the March sale was interested primarily in prints and drawings, and, like most serious print connoisseurs, preferred early states of reproductive and original engravings. This preference makes the omission of Blake's separate original engravings, like *Job*, *Ezekiel*, *Mirth*, *Albion Rose*, and *Our End Is Come*, and the omission of Blake's reproductive plates after Stothard, Morland, Watteau, Meheux, Fuseli, Hogarth, and Cosway, very suspicious. Given the tenor of the collection, one would expect to see many more intaglio prints by Blake if the "Amateur" collector was Blake's patron.¹⁵

Indeed, the collection does not resemble the patron depicted by Gilchrist (1: 115) or Ada Briggs, Captain Butts's sister-in-law. According to the latter, Butts was a man singularly devoted to collecting Blake, buying "the works of Blake alone, instead of . . . those of men esteemed in his day, many of them still esteemed in ours: Bartolozzi, Flaxman, Stothard. . ." (94). But drawings by Stothard and Flaxman and engravings by Bartolozzi were in the March auction (see lots 124-29, 186, 209, 223, among many others), whereas the three "pencil sketches of the Royal Dukes, by Laurence [sic]," which Briggs claims were the "only works by an artist . . . other than Blake" (94) that Butts bought, were *not* in the

March 1852 auction. They were, however, auctioned in June 1853 (lot 24), bought in and auctioned again in March 1854 (lot 34)—and again bought in, which means that they probably remained in the Butts family when Briggs was writing her profile. (They may have been sold privately, since they were not in the 1910 and 1932 auctions, or, more likely, they belonged to the Captain's sister, Mary Ann Blanch Pigott.) Apparently, Briggs's idea of Butts's collection was formed by the items still in the Butts family and those recorded by Rossetti, and not by the March 1852 auction.

Keynes reads the one extant letter from Butts to Blake (September 1800) as suggesting "that Butts was a dumb admirer of genius, which he could see but did not quite understand" (*Letters* xxii, 25-27). For Keynes, Butts acquired works by Blake because he wished to support Blake and not because he was an art collector. The only other document that we have from Butts strongly reinforces this interpretation. Butts's extraordinarily detailed 15-page will makes no mention of Blake or of any art collection. The only book it mentions is a "folio Bible," which was a "gift of Mrs Rain deceased" (p. 6). This he bequeathed to his grandson Henry Wellington Halse Butts. The collection that we know Butts Jr. inherited is simply referred to as "furniture" and came with the Fitzroy Square residence (see "Green House"). The will appears not to reflect the mind or habits of a genuine collector; conversely, the March 1852 collection of prints and drawings does not resemble the later Butts of the will (1845), who appears more interested in real estate than art.

Butts Jr. does mention an art collection, but its constitution supports the hypothesis that he was not responsible for the one sold at Sotheby's on 26-27 March 1852. In his will, he states:

I bequeath to my said Son and Daughter in equal shares as tenants in common all my pictures prints and drawings whether framed or unframed and all my bronzes of any kind whatsoever together with my Antique Roman Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius much wishing for an amiable partition of the same not to be sold but to be retained in affectionate remembrance of me by whom they are prized by reason of family recollections provided that if either of them my said son and daughter shall die in my lifetime then I bequeathed the whole . . . to the survivor.¹⁶

Captain Butts received—or chose—most of the Blakes in his father's collection of pictures, prints, and drawings. He received three miniature portraits, at least nine color-print drawings, nine temperas, 24 watercolor drawings, proofs of *Night Thoughts*, *The Book of Job* engravings, and a Dante

¹⁴ Moule, a bookdealer, had the lion's share of his library auctioned on 11 March 1852 at Sotheby's (unrecorded in Lugt); apparently, the remaining items from that collection were included in the 26-27 March 1852 auction. More of his lots were bought in than were the Amateur's.

¹⁵ Blake's intaglio prints included in the 26-27 March 1852 auction were four plates to Hayley's *Ballads*, a copy of *The Book of Job* engravings, two copies of *Night Thoughts*, and one copy of *The Grave* (lots 56, 58-61). In the 29 June 1853 auction, the engravings were a copy of *The Grave*, a copy of *Night Thoughts*, and the *Canterbury Pilgrims* engraving, all sold in lot 143.

¹⁶ Thomas Butts Jr. and his wife Mary Ann had three children: Frederick John, Aubrey Thomas, and Mary Ann Blanch, born in 1833, 1837, and 1845 respectively. Aubrey had died on 9 November 1861.

engraving.¹⁷ Mary Ann Blanch Butts apparently received—or chose—the non-Blake items in the collection. These presumably included as many as 20 of the 69 drawings and paintings by, “after,” and “in the manner of” Vandyke, Raphael, West, Zuccarelli, Titian, Rubens, among others (lots 1-62) that were bought in in Butts Jr.’s June 1853 and 1854 auctions.¹⁸ Mary Ann may have also inherited as many as 17 Blake works, a hypothesis inferred from the history of the tempera, *The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve*, c. 1826 (Butlin 806). The painting may have belonged to a member of George Richmond’s family, but a note by W. Graham Robertson states that it belonged to Mrs. Graham Pigott but was returned to Captain Butts.¹⁹ Mrs. Pigott (not Piggot, pace Butlin 806) was Mary Ann Blanch, who married George Edward Graham Foster Pigott on 17 January 1863. Mrs. Pigott is reputed to have owned 16 “further works” that were destroyed in a fire (Butlin 806). The rumor of a conflagration might be true, and the other “works” might have included Blakes. This would explain why 13 or 14 temperas seen by Rossetti when visiting Captain Butts in January 1863—before Butts Jr.’s collection was legally divided “in equal shares”—have not been seen since (see Butlin 380, 384, 385, 388, 391, 393, 395, 405, 412, 413, 414, 421, 431; see also 328). If Mary Ann received these Blakes along with the non-Blakes, the “bronzes,” and the statue (neither shows up in the 1903, 1910, or 1932 auctions), then son and daughter each received about the same number of works.

If Briggs is right about Butts being singularly devoted to Blake, then possibly the Lawrence sketches and almost certainly the 69 drawings and paintings by, “after,” and “in the manner of” Vandyke, Raphael, et al. reflect the taste of Butts Jr. and not his father. After selling most of his collection in June 1853, Butts Jr. still had Blakes and non-Blakes to give his children 10 years later. But this collection was relatively small and it does not at all resemble the one that sold in March 1852. There is almost no overlap between the two auctions. None of the six or seven lots in the March 1852

¹⁷ These are the works that Captain Butts, his widow, or son Anthony Bacon Drury Butts sold. For the color-print drawings, temperas, and watercolors, see Butlin 289, 294, 297, 301, 306, 310, 316, 320, 323; 382, 387, 390, 392, 398, 400, 402, 417, 673; 195, 434, 436, 450, 452, 455, 456, 459, 461, 464, 483, 490, 493, 497-99, 503, 505, 509, 511, 512, 515, 525, 675.

¹⁸ There were 144 numbered lots in the 1853 auction, but the lot numbers jump from 62 to 70 in the catalogue, presumably because there are 69 items in the first 62 lots. The Blakes begin with lot 70. The 24 non-Blake items bought in in 1853, which included the Lawrence sketches of the Royal Dukes, were put up for sale the following year, but only four sold.

¹⁹ *The Body of Abel* (c. 1826) would have been the only late tempera acquired by Butts, which strengthens the Richmond provenance. On the other hand, Butts was acquiring—or being given—works by Blake between 1822 and 1827, including *The Book of Job*, which he purchased in April 1826 at a discount for lending the original watercolors to Linnell for the tracings, and possibly the Dante engraving that sold in his grandson’s 1903 auction. See also n64.

auction that appear to have been withdrawn, or the four that appear to have been bought in, was included in Butts Jr.’s June 1853 auction—nor do they show up in the auctions of 1903, 1910, or 1932. This omission is very troubling, because 41 of the 43 Blake and non-Blake items that were bought in at Butts Jr.’s June 1853 auction were included in his March 1854 auction.²⁰ The 1854 catalogue’s title page states that the sale was of “Ancient and Modern Pictures, Part by direction of the Executors,” a heading which apparently means that part of the auction included works from an estate or estates put up for sale by the estate’s executors.²¹ The “Collection of Italian, Dutch, Flemish & English Pictures” that sold consisted of works belonging to numerous vendors; though none is mentioned on the title page, all are recorded in the annotated copy of the catalogue in the Victoria and Albert Museum Library.²² Butts Jr.’s 41 Blake and non-Blake items were in 14 lots. Lots 13-18 consisted of 17 Blake watercolors and temperas, announced on the title page as “A Few Drawings by the Late Mr. W. Blake” and in the catalogue itself as “Drawings by the Late William Blake.” Only four non-Blake items sold, and only two (now untraced) Blake works sold (Butlin 397, 399), and those sold to “Dean” for only 5s.6d. apiece.²³ The failure of the Blakes to sell in 1853 and 1854 may have been due to quality. Pos-

²⁰ Seven drawings, two watercolors, and one engraving appear to have been withdrawn on 26-27 March 1852, as is indicated by a pen line drawn through the lot number and by the absence of price and buyer in their respective columns to the right of the lot entry. These works were: “Guercino. Cupid, in sepia, very fine” (lot 92), “Vandyke. Group of figures, very spirited” (lot 98), and “Landscape, by Titian” (lot 103) “Snyders, etc. Sketches of Birds, etc. [4]” (lot 118), “Somers. View on the Coast, with Cottage and Figures” (lot 134), “Cotman. Ruins of an Ancient Castle in Normandy” (lot 324), “Bas Relievo, by Freebairn, india proof.” Lot 249 is crossed out: “Les Bons Amis, after Ostade, choice engraver’s proof before the letters”; this lot sold for £2 4s. to Tidbury (Charles? a printseller), whose name is also crossed through, a deletion which suggest the work was sold but returned. Works recorded with a price, without a buyer, and with the price repeated to the right of the buyer’s column and tallied up separately appear to have been bought in. These works were: “Dartmouth, by Reynolds, and Fonthill by Angus” (lot 79), “Aske Hall, by J. Scott [after Turner], india proof” (LOT 293), “unidentified lot penciled in” (LOT 331++), “Portrait of Charles James Fox, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, proof” (lot 337).

²¹ Only one estate is clearly noted in the catalogue: “Twelve lots by direction of the Executors” belong to “Charsley.”

²² Also part of the collection of “Ancient and Modern Pictures” was “the property of a Distinguished Artist” (R. R. Reinagle, with most of his 37 lots consisting of his own works). Lugt mentions Charsley, Reinagle, and Butts as the auction’s only vendors (#21763), but there were also Bush, Rives, Anthony, and others.

²³ Bentley states that “19 Blake drawings (lots 13-18) sold for L4 3s.” (*Blake Books* 660). Two of the items, however, were theatre portraits, and the £4 3s. was the sum of the reserve or buy in prices combined with the sum of the lot that sold. According to the Victoria and Albert Museum catalogue for the March 1854 sale, Dean bought lot 17 for 11 shillings, which consisted of theatrical portraits of Cooke and Kemble and the untraced temperas(?) of *Christ and his Disciples*, *St. Mark*, and *St. John*. (These last three works had been offered together in lot 141 on 29 June 1853.) In the margin, though, after Dean’s

sibly nine of the 17 Blakes appear to have been temperas, and they may already have been in poor condition.²⁴

No unsold item from the March 1852 sale shows up in the June 1853 sale and, more important, the artists and kinds of work in the March 1852 sale differ completely from the 69 drawings and paintings by, "after," and "in the manner of" Vandyke, Raphael, West, Zuccarelli, Titian, Rubens, et al. that sold in the June 1853 sale. With the exception of five wash drawings attributed to Zuccarelli, none of these artists was in the March 1852 sale, despite there being headings in that sale for "pictures" and "paintings." Such overt difference between two collections suggests different collectors, which in turn suggests that the March 1852 collection was not formed by Butts or his son.

The number of Blakes in the March 1852 auction—39 separate books and drawings—was relatively small, whereas the 117 Blakes in the June 1853 auction (lots 70-143) represents 2/3 of the sale. This latter auction was not at Sotheby's, like those of March 1852 and the Ford sale of June 1852, but at Foster and Son. The 1853 catalogue's title page announced a "Collection of Pictures, Drawings and Works of Art, The Property of Thomas Butts, Esq., Removing from his Residence, Grafton Street." The 117 Blakes are announced on page 6 of the catalogue with full fanfare: "Drawings & Pictures by the late WM. BLAKE, Whose genius and talents are familiar to the Public by his Illustrations to the Poem of 'The Grave,' 'Young's Night Thoughts,' etc." These drawings and pictures included watercolors, temperas, and Milton illustrations. No illuminated books, however, were included, and the celebrated illustrated books, *The Grave* and *Night Thoughts*, were grouped together with a copy of the *Canter-*

name, appears "(2 Mark & John)," which suggests that Dean acquired only two and not all five works in lot 17.

In the June 1853 auction, the "Two Theatre portraits, Cooke and Kemble" sold last (lot 144) but still as part of the Blake section. In March 1854, they were joined with three Blake paintings and thus seem purposefully identified as Blake's work. The portraits may have been executed by William Blake, one of the many engravers working for the publishers who produced plays and portraits for the juvenile drama, otherwise known as the toy theatre or "penny plain, twopence colored" prints. A William Blake etched the plates to the *The Broken Sword*, ca. 1816, published by Jameson. I have never seen a portrait of any of the Kembles or of T. P. Cooke that was done by this Blake, though most work of this kind was not signed.

²⁴ See Butlin 386, 389, 394, 397, 401, 423, 425A, 477, 671. In 1863, Rossetti recognized that many of the temperas were in poor condition, and in 1880, when he re-listed the works in the second edition of the *Life of Blake*, he often noted which had been restored. Of the 52 suspected temperas executed for Butts in 1799-1800, 23 are untraced (Butlin 379-432). Two and possibly three of these were unknown to Rossetti (Butlin 418, 386, 430). I suspect that a number of the untraced temperas no longer exist; as many as 16 might have been lost in a fire (see above), while others have deteriorated beyond repair. Some may have deteriorated before any records (in the form of Butts's sale catalogues or Rossetti's lists) were made. Blake's *Christ Baptizing* was already being repaired in 1805 (see Bentley, *Blake Records* 573).

bury Pilgrims engraving and sold in the same lot, instead of singularly, as the intaglio works were in the March 1852 auction.²⁵ The catalogue's title page also announces "A Collection of Pictures and Drawings, By the Late William Blake, Distinguished for originality of Design, and facility of Pencil, Amongst which are subjects from Sacred History, Illustrations from Milton, etc. and forming a Curious and, perhaps, Matchless Assemblage of the Works of this Highly Gifted Artist." The acknowledgement of the collection's diversity and merit is curious. A bit of advertising puff, no doubt, but possibly also an allusion to the Blake sales of the previous year (March and June), which did not include temperas. But why imply that your collection is bigger and better than the others if the other sales were your own and the ultimate provenance was the same?

As noted, Rossetti saw what was left of the Butts collection on 15 January 1863, through the auspices of Captain Butts (see n8). How much information the Captain supplied is not known. It appears to have been minimal, for Rossetti clearly was unaware of two crucial facts that one assumes the Captain would have supplied if he could have. Rossetti failed to recognize that the buyer "Thomas" in the June 1853 auction was the name used by Butts Jr. (or the name given to him by the auctioneer) to buy-in, and he was unaware of the March 1854 auction altogether, as is evinced by his recording the provenance of two temperas as "Mr. Thomas, from Mr. Butts" (204, #29, 31), despite their having sold in the March 1854 auction to Dean. He appears to have relied heavily on the lists first compiled by Gilchrist and William Haines, which probably included the information (titles and buyers) provided by the March 1852 and June 1853 annotated auction catalogues.²⁶

Of the three nineteenth-century auctions now associated with Butts Jr., only the two at Foster and Son in 1853 and 1854 can be said with certainty to have been his. The first and largest of the three auctions, at Sotheby's in March 1852, included Blakes from the Butts collection, but it appears also to have had a few Blakes already in it, or at least Blakes that cannot be traced documentarily to Butts, like *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* copy F, *The Book of Thel* copy L, a posthumous copy of *Jerusalem* (copy I), and the Milton *Nativity* designs (see below).²⁷ And the sale contained copies of *The*

²⁵ Bentley's *Blake Books* records 110 watercolors and paintings (660), which apparently excludes the seven small Shakespeare designs that sold in lot 102 with the *Sacrifice of Isaac*.

²⁶ Frederick John Butts enlisted in the army on 18 March 1853 (77th, East Middlesex), and made Captain on 4 April 1855 (information supplied by Keri Davies and Ted Ryan). His apparent failure to inform Rossetti of these facts suggests that he was probably not present at either of his father's auctions.

²⁷ Blake lists "Urizen, Heaven etc etc Songs of Experience" 10s.6d." in his 1805 account with Butts, but given their very low price these seem to refer to separate plates later bound with Blakeana (*Blake Records* 573 and n4). Butts is not known to have owned a copy of *Urizen*, and he paid L6 6s. for copy E of *Songs* in 1806.

Grave, *Night Thoughts*, and *The Book of Job* engravings, the Blake works most commonly found in print and book collections of the day. The anonymous vendor was probably not Butts Jr. If all 1500 or so items in this auction belonged to Butts, then his art collection was very much larger and far more diversely constituted than previously imagined, and our ideas of him and his relation to Blake are wildly inaccurate: Blake was but one of his collecting interests and probably not someone whom he recognized as a visionary artist and chose to support through open-ended commissions. But if our picture of Butts is even near accurate, then the collection that sold in March 1852 was not formed by Butts. Nor does it seem likely to have been formed by his son; that requires assuming that Butts Jr. was a very serious collector of prints and drawings who sold his own large collection but kept most of the Blakes given to him by his father as well as works not at all like those he supposedly had collected. The taste reflected in his June 1853 auction strongly suggests that he was not the vendor of the March 1852 auction. If not, then a Blake collector goes unrecognized, and the possibility that the Ford sale of 26 June 1852 was not an "untraced Butts sale" is greatly strengthened. Conversely, if the vendor of the Blakes in the Ford sale was Ford or someone other than Butts Jr., then the likelihood that the vendor of the March 1852 auction was not Butts Jr. is much increased. Suspicion of one casts suspicion on the other, because the rationale for attributing the sales to Butts Jr.—most of the Blakes in the sales came from his father's collection—is the same. Indeed, as I hope will become apparent, the March and June 1852 auctions are not the first dispersal of the Butts collection; rather, they are the traces of earlier dispersals made by other members of Butts family. They are also signs that the circle of mid-nineteenth-century Blake collectors was not the "small knot" that Rossetti imagined it (*Selected Letters* 204).²⁸

Traceable Mounts in an Untraced Blake Sale

Watercolors from Blake's biblical series sold at each of the nineteenth-century auctions in March 1852, June 1853, and March 1854. Watercolors from the same series were also sold at Ford's auction in June 1852. What suggests that at least some of those in the Ford auction were once owned by Butts,

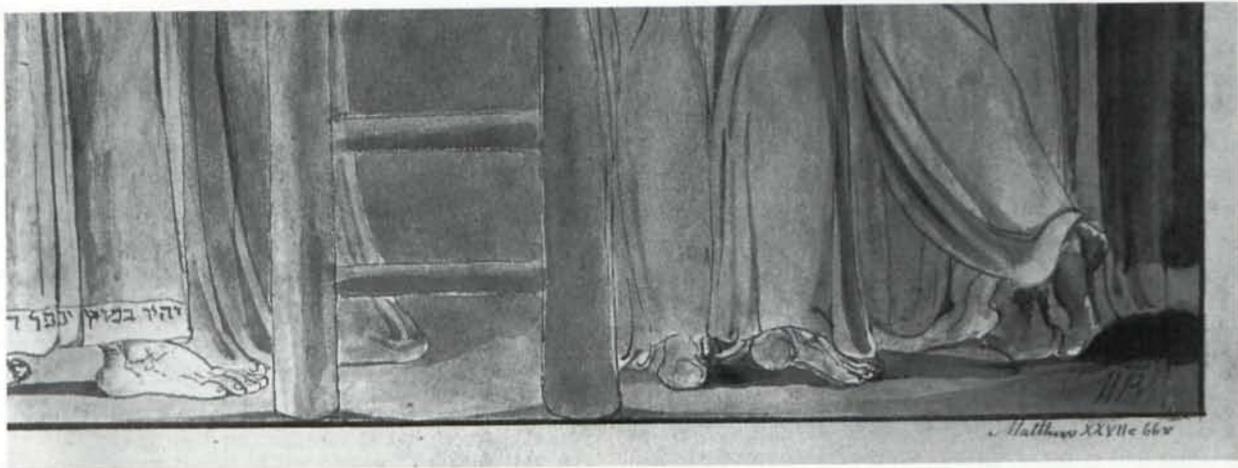
²⁸ Suspecting that Butts Jr. was not the vendor of the 26-27 March 1852 sale is one thing; identifying the vendor is something else again. As noted, most of the works sold were prints, and the provenances of multiples are exceedingly difficult to determine. Traceable works, like the Turners and Old Master drawings, were acquired by dealers who apparently did not identify their source to their buyers (n7 and n12), and other works are untraceable because they were titled generically (e.g., landscape), making it impossible to trace their complete provenances with any assurance. The Blakes are the most identifiable works in the collection; for the possible identification of the person from whom the "Amateur" might have acquired the Blakes, see "Green House."

and were not commissioned by another patron collecting at the same time (like the Rev. Joseph Thomas, who commissioned the first series of *Comus*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Nativity*, in 1801, 1807, and 1809 respectively), is Butts's receipt from 12 May 1805 listing titles (Bentley, *Blake Records* 572) that match or echo those in lots 158, 169, 170, and 171 (see Appendix 1). Unfortunately, these particular echoes only suggest rather than prove because each of the works exists in more than one version, leaving the possibility that the versions delivered to Butts are not the ones sold in the June 1852 auction. What provides conclusive proof that these watercolors were once in the Butts collection is the style in which they were mounted, a style used only by Butts for his biblical watercolors and *Paradise Lost* illustrations.

Blake's original mode of presenting watercolors seems difficult to determine, because collectors routinely trim and frame their acquisitions. However, a few of the biblical watercolors in the Butts collection remain on untrimmed sheets of paper, and from these we can deduce the manner in which the other biblical watercolors were probably presented to Butts. Blake signed his monogram in pen, usually the bottom right corner; in the same corner, just under the image, he penned in a biblical reference using roman numerals for the chapter and arabic for the verse (as in *Milton* plate 2). He usually drew a thin borderline in dark brown or black ink along the edge of the image, which he sometimes echoed with a few more lines drawn in the margins, thereby creating a frame, or what was then known as a "washline mount" (Wilton and Lyles 299).²⁹ These three features—signature, inscription, and frame—are exemplified by *Sealing the Stone* and *Setting the Watch* (Butlin 499). It is signed in Blake's monogram, inscribed "Matthew XXVIII 66v," and framed by four grey pen and ink lines, which create three bands, with the last band lightly washed in grey (illus. 2). A title is inscribed below the image in pencil; it is probably not by Blake but is possibly by Butts.³⁰

²⁹ Simulated washline mounts could be purchased at stationers. Prints and drawings could then be trimmed and pasted into them.

³⁰ The original right and left border lines of *Sealing the Stone* were erased, and the design (clothes, figures, and background washes) was extended, presumably by Blake. The framing of *The Ascension* (Butlin 505) is even more elaborate, with five bands created by the borderline and five framelines. The bands are white, pale blue, white, purple, and pale blue respectively, with "The Ascension" written in pencil under the image, in the blue band, possibly in the same hand responsible for the title of *Sealing the Stone*. Both of these designs have roman numerals at the top of the frame, VII and IX respectively. *The River of Life* (Butlin 525) is similarly framed, with bands in light brownish orange, blue, grey, and white, but has no text or numeral. *Christ Crucified between Two Thieves* has a brown borderline and a frameline outside the inscription, and a pencil line outside that, presumably the preliminary line for another frameline. Inscribed below (and not on a mount, pace Butlin 494) in pencil in copperplate hand is: "And he said unto Jesus, 'Lord remember me when thou comest unto thy kingdom.'" The hand resembles that on *Sealing the Stone*. *Mercy and Truth Are Met Together* (Butlin 463) also has a washline mount (now hidden from view in a modern frame) and is inscribed below the image: "Mercy



2 *Sealing the Stone and Setting the Watch*, c. 1800-03. Pen and watercolor over pencil, 40.1 x 33.3 cm on paper 51 x 43.1 cm. Yale Center for British Art. Detail of monogram, biblical inscription, and washline mount.

Watercolors with washline mounts were obviously never trimmed to the image by Butts. They were probably never mounted, either, or at least not in the inlaid style which Butts used for nearly all the other biblical watercolors in his collection. In this style, the sheet was trimmed to the image, which removed the margins/frame and biblical inscription; it was then inlaid along the edges of a window cut out of a large sheet of thick crayon or drawing paper (about two index cards thick) approximately 55.5 x 44.5 cm.³¹ So treated,

and Truth have met together, Rightousness and [?] have kissed each other" (information supplied by Martin Butlin).

Butlin indicates untrimmed sheets by noting paper size in addition to image size (see Butlin 499 and 505), though *The Ghost of Samuel Appearing to Saul* (Butlin 458) is recorded as being 32 x 34.4 cm "on paper" 54 x 44 cm. This work was trimmed to the image; it is the mount that is 55.7 x 44.5 cm. Framelines and washline mounts are usually not indicated (see Butlin 494, 499, 505, 525).

³¹ This style of presentation, which was popular throughout the nineteenth-century, is also called a "drum mount," because the image is stretched over the window like a skin over a drum.

The nine color-print drawings inherited by Captain Butts were untrimmed and seven of these were inscribed below the image with the work's title (see Butlin 289, 294, 297, 301, 306, 310, 316, 320, 323). Butts purchased eight of these in 1805, and at least five of these appear to have been from the 1795 printing and three from a new printing c. 1804 or 1805 (see Butlin, "Physicality"), printed on the same paper and in the same style to match the earlier impressions. The margins left by Blake on the latter impressions, in other words, were probably determined by their presence in the earlier impressions. Perhaps Butts never trimmed the color prints because they were too large (at 54 x 77 cm) to be inlaid into mounts or because they were already on thick paper.

Butts probably had the complete set of 12 color prints, though there is no record that he owned *Naomi Entreating Ruth* and only 10 can be clearly traced to him (those above and Butlin 325). At least one, and probably two from the series (Butlin 291 and 325) were acquired by Strange by 1863, apparently through private sale. If both were so acquired, then none of Butts's color prints sold through auction—which is to say, they were kept as a series by Butts and his son.

the watercolor, which is on thinner paper, became flush with its mount. The biblical inscription trimmed away was rewritten in pencil on the mount in the same position, with the roman numerals changed to arabic.³² Also on the mount, quotations were added below the image, and sometimes they were added above as titles; both were written in pencil in a fine copperplate hand. For example, the biblical inscription on *The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea* (Butlin 521) is "Rev^{ns}: ch: 13th: v. 1: & 2:" (illus. 3); at the top of the mount is the title, "And power was given him over all kindreds, & tongues, & nations" (illus. 4).³³ Below the im-

³² Three watercolors once belonging to Butts were trimmed to the biblical inscription (about one half inch from the image) instead of to the image itself, but these seem to have been trimmed by Blake, who exhibited them in 1808 and 1809. In 1808, he exhibited *Jacob's Dream* and *Christ in the Sepulchre* (Butlin 438, 500) at the Royal Academy; both works were exhibited the following year at Blake's exhibition, along with *The Soldiers Casting Lots for Christ's Garments* (Butlin 495), which was similarly trimmed. Trimming watercolors to or near the image was often an exhibition requirement (see Essick, "Blake's 1812 Exhibition" 36). In 1784, Blake exhibited at the Royal Academy *A Breach in a City Wall the Morning after the Battle*, and in 1785 he exhibited three watercolors on the subject of Joseph and his brethren (Butlin 191, 155-57). These designs are to the edge of the paper and thus in effect appear trimmed to the image.

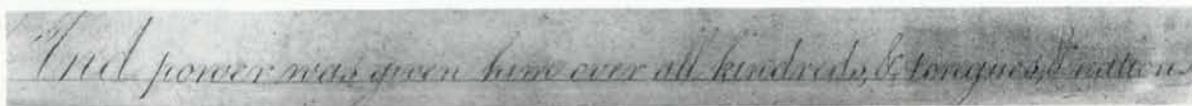
Blake gave the separate plates of the *Small Book of Designs* copy B three or four framing lines, as he did to *Songs* copies R and V, *All Religions are One* copy A, and *There is No Natural Religion* copy L. Beginning in 1818, when he resumed illuminated printing, Blake printed his plates with their borders and gave the impressions a single framing line (see Viscomi, *Book* ch. 33).

³³ Another example: at the top of *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (Butlin 439) is "Joseph and Jezebel," the biblical inscription is "Gen. ch: 39th: v. 17th: & 18," and below the image in two lines is inscribed, "And she spake unto her Lord according to these words, / saying, the Hebrew servant which thou has brought unto." At least one line was cut away from the mount, presumably the last words of verse 17 ("us, came in unto me to mock me"). The two or three lines of verse 18 may also have been cut away; it was not unusual for the text to be four or more

3 *The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea*, c. 1803-05. Pen and watercolor, 40.1 x 35.6 cm. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. Detail of biblical inscription, copperplate hand written in pencil.



4 *The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea*. Detail of title, copperplate hand written in pencil.



age are four lines: "And I stood and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, & upon / his horns ten crowns, & upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw / was like unto a leopard, & his feet were as the feet of a bear, & his mouth as the mouth of a lion, / and the dragon gave him his power, & his seat & his great authority" (illus. 5). The absence of quotations on the untrimmed (washline) sheets—the sheets as given to Butts—suggests that the long titles and quotations were derived from Blake's biblical inscriptions but supplied, if not also written, by Butts.³⁴

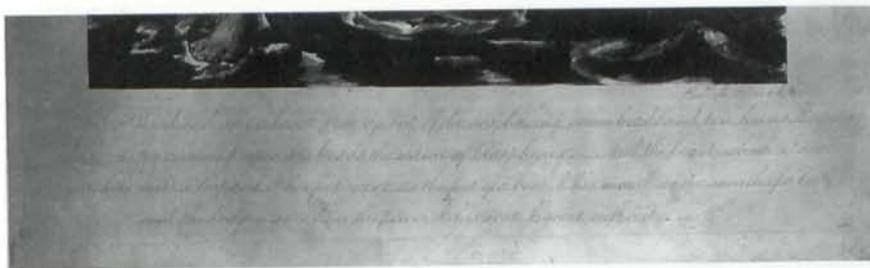
lines (*The Ghost of Samuel Appearing to Saul*, for example, has 11 lines of text).

The intended form of the biblical watercolors has been recently questioned by Bindman, who has suggested that they may have been part of, or designed for, an extra-illustrated volume of the bible (*Job* 27). Butlin believes they were meant for display and cites the copperplate inscriptions as proof of their having filled that intention (review of *Job* 107). Since these inscriptions were written years after the works were purchased, original intention probably cannot be inferred from final form, but the original washline mounts were suitable for framing as well as portfolios. The size of untrimmed sheets, approximately 52 x 43 cm (possibly a demy or half a double demy sheet), does not rule out Bindman's hypothesis, but it would suggest a very large bible indeed.

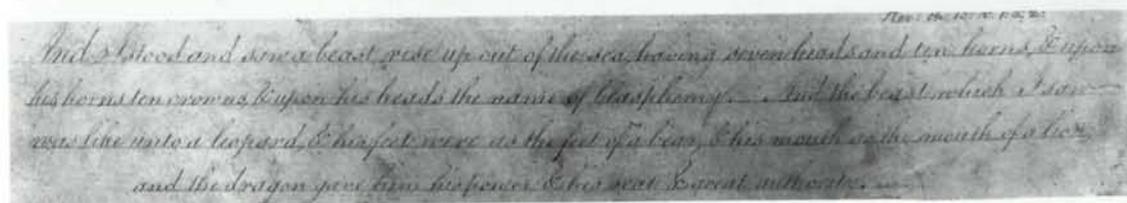
³⁴ The origin of Blake's titles is a topic beyond the scope of this paper, but it is integrally linked to Blake scholarship and requires ex-

Graham Robertson, however, has suggested that the mounts and biblical texts are the work of Mrs. Blake, written when the watercolors were sold to Butts (see Robertson 122, 127, 160). If Mrs. Blake wrote the texts, then almost certainly she or Blake also trimmed the watercolors and inlaid them into their mounts, which, in turn, means that works so inscribed and mounted cannot be traced to one collection or collector. If the Blakes were responsible for the texts and mounts, then works mounted in this style—like those acquired from the Ford auction in June 1852 by Fuller (Butlin 519, 521, 522)—could be traced to Blake and/or Mrs. Blake directly or through a patron other than Butts. If all the inlaid mounts of the kind described above belong to Butts and not the Blakes, then it is crucial to recognize that Robertson is mistaken about Mrs. Blake. The evidence lies in three facts: watercolors executed for other patrons, like Rev. Thomas or Linnell, were not so mounted; the extra time and cost of mounting are not reflected in the receipts that mention works that were subsequently mounted (see Bentley, *Blake Records* 572-74); and, most telling, despite the tradition of Blake having taught Catherine to read and write,

amination. Appendix 1 gives an idea of how complex the issue is by listing the various titles that some works have had in various sale catalogues and catalogue raisonnés.



5 *The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea*. Detail of inscription, copperplate hand written in pencil.



the only examples of her writing are two signatures, one in which Catherine is misspelled (Keynes, *Letters* xvii). Needless to say, there is no evidence that she knew copperplate hand.

The mounts themselves supply evidence that they were acquired by Butts and not the Blakes. Many are embossed in the top left corner with an oval stamp in the shape of a palette that reads "Turnbull's Crayon Board" (illus. 6).³⁵ Crayon or drawing boards "are heavy drawing papers or cardboard, white or tinted, with a rough surface on one side and glazed on the other, specially prepared for crayon drawings, sepia or water-colour work" (Labarre 126). The date of manufacture is difficult to ascertain. The manufacturer may have been Thomas Turnbull, who is listed in *Holden's Triennial Directory* for 1802-04 as a "Hot-presser" at 23 Booth Street, Spitalfields. (Hot pressing is a method of finishing paper by glazing with hot plates.) In *Johnstone's London Commercial Guide, and Street Directory* for 1817, he is listed under "Calenderers & Hot Pressers," but not under "Card & Pasteboard Makers"—whereas none of the seven pasteboard makers listed are hotpressers. ("Calender" refers to the rolls through which paper was pressed to give it its finish, and calendering is the method that ultimately replaced hot pressing.) Or, more likely, the manufacturer was J. L. & J. Turnbull, who were listed in *Kent's Directory* for 1819 as "stationers and

hot pressers" at 105 Bunhill Row. This firm was first listed in 1815 as Lucas & Turnbull at 20 Chiswell Street. By 1824 they advertise themselves in the *Post Office London Directory* as "Stationers & Booksellers," and by 1834 as "Drawing board & Card Makers and Hot-pressers" and have moved a few blocks east to Curtain Road, Holywell Mount, Shoreditch.

Combined with other evidence, it seems likely that the Turnbull "Crayon Board" used for mounts was made by the brothers Turnbull, who advertised themselves as makers of this kind of product. A post-1819 date for the mounts, of course, means that they were added years after the drawings were purchased. This does not necessarily mean that the drawings were not displayed on the walls of Butts's house. While works in washline mounts were usually stored in portfolios, the mounts also encouraged display. Perhaps the systematic remounting of the Blakes in a uniform style was prompted by the original washline mounts having been pinned to walls or boards, hence the need to trim the original margins.

As noted, Butts left some watercolors untrimmed and thus presumably unmounted; at least three were in this style in the March 1852 auction (Butlin 463, 494, 506) and three more in Butts's June 1853 auction (Butlin 495, 500, 639). But clearly he drum-mounted most of his Blake watercolors, though this fact is no longer apparent because so many of the watercolors have been rematted and/or framed. Many of these, however, are recorded in sale catalogues by quotations (see lots 161 and 174 in Appendix 1, and Butlin 469, 470), or by Butlin as having inscribed mounts just 20 or 30 years ago.³⁶ Though only eight of the 23 biblical watercolors in Ford's June 1852 auction are still in their original, Butts-style mounts, all 23 are trimmed to the image, which is why

³⁵ The Turnbull stamp is visible on *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun*, *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun: "The Devil is Come Down,"* *The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea* (illus. 5), *The Ghost of Samuel Appearing to Saul*, *The Angel Rolling the Stone away from the Sepulchre*, *The Three Marias at the Sepulchre*, *The Devil Rebuked*; *The Burial of Moses* (Butlin 519, 520, 521, 458, 501, 503, 449), among others. These works were all mounted by the same person or shop, and while copperplate hand is a generic calligraphic hand, distinctive flourishes among the texts strongly indicate that they were written by the same person. For example, three of these works (Butlin 520, 521, and 458) have inscriptions beginning with an "A" whose left leg extends into the same style of large and very decorative swash or loop.

³⁶ It is to such front window mats, and not Butts' mounts, that Butlin refers to when he notes that title and text are "now concealed by the mount" (e.g., 458).

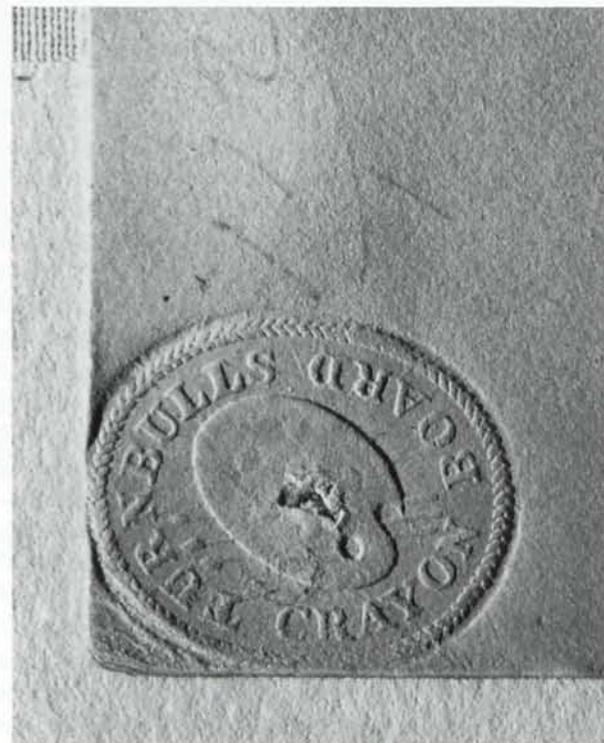
I assume that probably all were once uniformly mounted in this inlaid style and thus originally from the Butts collection.³⁷

Butts may have acquired the crayon boards to mat the watercolors himself, or had a local stationer mat them using such boards. The latter seems more likely, because the mounts appear professionally cut. Their calligraphic texts, however, appear more amateurish, as is suggested by the presence of unerased ruling lines on some of the mounts and the exclusive use of pencil rather than pen. As chief clerk in the office of the Commissary General of Musters, Butts had developed a fine copperplate hand and would have been able to write the text. The similarity of the "the" and other letters in the texts of *Sealing the Stone* (illus. 2) and *The Great Dragon* (illus. 5) may be due to a shared letter style, but it may also be due to the same hand. However the mounts were prepared, the reasons for Butts's having one watercolor mounted but not another lie with the patron and not the artist.

Charles Ford and the June 1852 Sale

Blake's biblical watercolors at the Ford auction in June 1852 were mounted in the Butts style. These works appear certainly to have belonged at one time to Butts. Who owned them in June 1852, however, is the question. The title page of the sale catalogue reads: CATALOGUE / OF THE / VALUABLE COLLECTION / OF / WATER-COLOUR DRAWINGS[,] / THE PROPERTY OF / CHARLES FORD, ESQ. OF BATH, / COMPRISING / *Beautiful Examples of the Productions of* / BARRETT, COX, CHAMBERS, CATTERMOLLE, DE WINT, LEWIS, COPLEY FIELDING, HARDING, HUNT, F. TAYLER, TOPHAM, ROBERTS / AND / J. M. W. TURNER. / FINE CHARACTERISTIC DRAWINGS BY / WILLIAM BLAKE, / TOGETHER WITH / A FEW PAINTINGS, &C. / THE PROPERTY OF AN AMATEUR" (illus. 1). Auctions often included works from more than one collection or vendor, but, as noted, this fact was almost always recorded somewhere in the catalogue, either on the title page or as a subheading in the catalogue itself, or at the very least in annotated file copies. The convention, then, strongly suggests that Ford and the Amateur were the auction's only two vendors. The convention for title pages seems to have been to separate artists and titles of works within one vendor's collection by commas and semi-colons, but to separate different collections by periods. Thus the period after "Turner" in the Ford sale catalogue is unexpected, forcing us to read "Fine Characteristic Drawings by

³⁷ *St. Paul shaking off the Viper* in lot 175 of the Ford sale is probably Butlin 510 (see Appendix 1). Though it is in a private collection and unexamined, its inscription is said to read: "Acts XVIII c. 6.v." This is Blake's form, but there are two reasons I assume that this work was also once mounted in the Butts style and that the inscription is not Blake's. The inscription should read "Acts XXVIII c. 6.v.," and the work was once owned by Quaritch, who bound eight similar Butts watercolors in a portfolio, now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, using the same style of notation on the contents page (see n59).



6 "Turnbull's Crayon Board." Blind embossed stamp in the mount of *The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea*, c. 1803-05.

William Blake, together with A Few Paintings, &c. the Property of an Amateur." as one sentence. The syntax indicates that the Blakes—together with a few paintings, by which is meant oil paintings rather than watercolors—belonged to the "Amateur."

Can the syntax be trusted? In the March 1852 auction at Sotheby's, the heading "Property of the Late Thomas Moule, Esq." is on page 17, immediately following lot 349. On the title page of this auction, however, the two collections are separated by a semicolon instead of a period. The semicolon was used for this purpose in many Sotheby sale catalogues, including the auction immediately following Ford's.³⁸ The title page of the sale catalogue of William Monck Mason, whose auction preceded Ford's only by a few weeks, used a period inside the list of Mason's collection.³⁹ The sale catalogue of Butts's June 1853 auction did the same: ". . . and many other fine pictures. Also, A Collection of Pictures

³⁸ The collection of Mr. R. W. Silvestre sold at Sotheby's on 28 June 1852 with an anonymous collection. The two collections are separated by a semicolon, followed by "to which is added." The coin collection of Thomas Moule sold at Sotheby's on 7 June 1852 with two anonymous collections and the collection of J. W. Harrison, which are all separated by semicolons and not periods, despite the fact that all four collections were substantial enough to require separate sale days.

³⁹ "Catalogue of the Valuable and Important Philological and General Library of William Monck Mason, Esq. . . . including A copy of Bartsch Peintre Graveur, Revised and Amended as to the Italian De-

and Drawings, by the late William Blake. . . ." The frequent use of the semicolon in place of the expected period, and the occasional period in place of the semicolon or comma prevents one from relying exclusively on the cataloguer's punctuation—or compositor's eyesight. The period and comma in the title page of the Ford catalogue may have been mistakenly transposed. This, at least, is exactly what the placement of the Blake watercolors within the auction and sale catalogue indicates.

The Blake watercolors are followed by a ruled line (illus. 7), which usually indicates the end of one property and the start of the next. But Ford's property does not end with Blake, for following him are lots 183 to 194, which consist of four works by J. F. Lewis, seven by F. W. Topham, and one by Turner, all of whom are mentioned unambiguously on the catalogue's title page as part of Ford's collection.⁴⁰ Structurally, the Blakes are grouped within Ford's collection instead of the Amateur's. Up to and including the Turner (lot 194), the lots are almost exclusively of British late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century works on paper. The Blake watercolors are all c. 1803-08 and fit more comfortably within Ford's collection than within what follows. Lots 195 to 206 consist of 16 items, including five "Drawings on Patent Mounts" by Simeon, Gaman (Gamain?), Le Roy, and two anonymous artists, and 11 "Paintings" by Zuccarelli, Moroni, Wilson, Heemskeerck, and four unknown artists. Only Wilson is an English artist, but the fact that his "Landscape, with Castle, Figures in foreground" (lot 203) sold for a mere seven shillings strongly suggests that this is a misattribution.⁴¹ Moreover, these are not the artists or kinds of art that Butts—as reflected in his son's and grandson's auctions—collected. The June 1853 auction at Foster's, for example, contains no works by Heemskeerck, Moroni, Le Roy, Gaman, or Simeon,

partment, and Augmented with two Volumes of Supplemented Matter in Manuscript. Also Capital Bookcases, Library Tables, etc."

⁴⁰ Of the eight Topham drawings in the auction, seven (lots 187-93) were grouped after the Blake works; all four J. F. Lewis works were also grouped after Blake (183-86).

⁴¹ Simeon is probably Pierre Simeon, a nineteenth-century French architectural artist; Gaman is probably Louis Gamain, a nineteenth-century French marine artist; LeRoy is probably Pierre Francois Le Roy, the elder, a nineteenth-century Flemish animal and battle painter. Moroni probably refers to Giovanni Battista Moroni, whose painting is a "Portrait of Aretino," no doubt Pietro Aretino, the satirist (1492-1556). Moroni was a portrait painter who died in 1578, but he is not known to have painted a portrait of Aretino (Gregori). More likely, this portrait is a small copy of one by Titian (1545) in the Pitti Gallery and is wrongly attributed to Moroni. The fact that it sold for only one pound in a decade when five of his portraits sold from 28 to 246 pounds (James 2: 263) suggests that the work was not taken as authentic. The paintings by Zuccarelli, Wilson, and Heemskeerck (probably Maerten) are probably not originals either; this is suggested by the extremely low prices they brought in (less than a pound each). Unfortunately, none of the works belonging to the Amateur can be traced, because the titles are either generic or the attributions are incorrect.

7 Page 10, Sotheby's sale catalogue for Charles Ford's collection, 26 June 1852.

or any "Drawings on Patent Mounts," or any Topham or Lewis, or paintings by Wilson or Zuccarelli, though two drawings attributed to Zuccarelli were included. Although the March 1852 auction was probably not Butts Jr.'s, it is worth pointing out that it too contained none of these artists or matting styles except for five pencil drawings attributed to Wilson and five wash drawings attributed to Zuccarelli. The break between Ford and Amateur appears to begin with lot 195, with different artists (continental), different mode of presenting art ("Patent Mounts"), and different media (paintings). The absence of a catalogue sub-heading also suggests that the Amateur's collection really was a mere 16 items in 12 lots, tacked on at the end of the sale and catalogue, where its shape and content are self-evident.

Somewhere there is a mistake. Either the typesetter transposed a period and comma on the catalogue's title page—or house style was less consistent and meaningful than we imagine—in which case the Blakes belonged to Ford. Or the cataloguer accidentally nested the Amateur's Blake collection within the Ford lots. One could argue that Sotheby's may have included Blakes from another collection—the Amateur's—in the Ford auction because aesthetically they fit so perfectly and would appeal to the same audience as the works in Ford's collection. But inclusion in the sale does

not require nesting the works *within* Ford's collection. The auction was only a one-day sale consisting of 212 lots; had the Blakes belonged to the Amateur, they could have followed the Topham, Lewis, and Turner like the Amateur's other works, which would have marked his property while also seamlessly continuing the kinds of work central to the sale. One would also think that Sotheby's need to keep accounts, if not also provenances, distinct would make nesting unlikely.

More to the point, Ford did own at least two works by Blake. Lot 11 consists of "The Transfiguration, *coloured*; and Time with the hour glass," which may have been proofs from *Night Thoughts* [Appendix 1]. The separation of lot 11 from the watercolors does not necessarily indicate separate collectors, since lot 11 is among lots with multiple items, most of which are listed as "sketches" and "studies." The single-item lots begin in earnest on page 5, with lot 50, and the subsequent works are primarily watercolor drawings, with descriptions like "finely finished," "very fine," "a beautiful sketch," and "powerfully painted" appearing regularly. The two Blake works in lot 11 may be outside the main Blake section because they are not "Original Drawings in Colours" but prints or sketches, the kinds of works that started the auction. Other artists whose works are grouped together, like Hunt, Topham, Cox, Duncan, and Wilkie, also have a few works outside their main groups. The presence, then, of two Blakes in Ford's collection increases the likelihood that the watercolors were also part of his collection.

The historical, technical, and national coherencies of the Ford collection support the idea that the Blakes belonged to Ford and not the Amateur. Like the unknown collector of the March 1852 auction, Ford appears to have acquired Blakes from the Butts collection from an unknown source and added them to his collection. Such transactions did take place; that is, some collectors did acquire Blakes from the Butts collection either directly from Butts or, according to Briggs, from Butts Jr. Briggs states that "the son . . . is believed to have hated Blake; at any rate he disposed of as many of the drawings as he could as soon as they became his own property" (96). She says that "after his father's death [he] either gave away or sold for a mere trifle a great many of the pictures, and notably the Inventions to the Book of Job, which was sold by Lord Crewe at Sotheby's on March 30th, 1904, for £5,600, the highest price, it is believed, ever paid for any comparatively modern book" (93). The Book of Job watercolors were acquired by Richard Monckton Milnes, later Lord Houghton (father of Lord Crewe), presumably from Butts Jr. between 1845 and 1862 (the death of Butts and Butts Jr.) for an unknown sum. The idea that Butts Jr. sold the series and other of Blake's works for demeaning sums is based entirely on post-Gilchrist prices. As we will see, when Butts Jr.'s auctions are contextualized, the prices reflect Blake's then fair market value. Butts Jr. was neither giving the stuff away nor, apparently, in any hurry to rid

himself of Blake. Indeed, he insists in his will that his children retain the collection, which included his father's Blakes, "in affectionate remembrance of me by whom they are prized by reason of family recollections." Moreover, the sale that is assuredly his occurred at Foster's a full eight years after Butts died (and one and a half years after Mrs. Butts, his stepmother, died, for which see my "Green House"). The Foster sale may have been prompted by his "Removing from his Residence"—itself possibly prompted by the enlistment of his 20-year old son Frederick in the army on 18 March 1853 (see n26). Nevertheless, while the motivation behind that auction and the others may be in question, the idea that Butts Jr.—or some other member of the family—may have privately sold single works before resorting to auctions is borne out by the historical record.

F. T. Palgrave, for example, acquired the temperas *The Body of Christ Borne to the Tomb* and *The Virgin Hushing the Young Baptist* (Butlin 426, 406), inscribing the former: "Bought of Mr. Butts of Fitzroy Square—about 1852. F. T. Palgrave." The color print of *Christ Appearing to the Apostles* and the tempera *The Nativity*, the latter of which failed to sell at Butts Jr.'s 1853 and 1854 auctions, were acquired by J. C. Strange by 1863 (Butlin 325, 401). The *Whore of Babylon* was acquired by the British Museum in 1847 through "Evans" (Butlin 523), though when and how it left the Butts collection is unknown. Milnes acquired *Jacob's Dream*, the Job watercolors, and *The Holy Family* by 1863 (Butlin 438, 550, 671).⁴² Dante Gabriel and William Michael Rossetti acquired temperas (*Lot and his Daughters* and *St. Matthew*) that are recorded as coming from Mr. Butts (Rossetti 223, #111; 204, #28; Butlin 381, 396), though no sales are known (see also Butlin 428) and, as noted, no mention of Butts Jr. is made in either of their correspondence, which raises the possibility that they acquired the works from a third party, who acquired it from either Butts or Butts Jr.—or from another member of the family.

Blakes did leave the Butts collection through private sale; Butts Jr., however, was not necessarily the only one behind those sales. Indeed, recent discoveries about Thomas Butts's residences and family strongly support the idea that other members of the Butts family had access to and possibly acquired and sold the Blakes from the Butts collection in the March and June 1852 auctions (see Viscomi, "Green House"). The presence of Blakes from the Butts collection in auctions whose vendors might not have been Butts Jr. suggests that the Butts collection began to be dispersed before 1852 and that interest in collecting Blake was wider and the number of Blake collectors larger than previously realized. And this, combined with an extended family and numerous residences, suggests that Butts Jr. may have not been the first to disperse publicly the Butts Blake collection. But the idea that Butts Jr. was at the Ford auction in June 1852 *buying* Blakes once owned by his father raises other problems.

Another Unknown Blake Collector and Sale

The Blakes in Ford's June 1852 auction thus appear to have belonged to Ford, who acquired them from a Butts family member; or, less likely, they may have belonged to the Amateur, who either did the same or was a Butts descendant other than Butts Jr. The fourth and most unlikely possibility is that they belonged to the Amateur who was Butts Jr. Admittedly, the idea that Butts was at the auction selling Blakes is easier to believe than his buying them, because the Blakes involved were once his father's. But this seemingly logical conclusion requires that the Blakes were incorrectly nested in Ford's collection and that Blake failed to sell, something the other auctions of 1852 and 1853 make unlikely (see below). Equally significant, such a conclusion is challenged by Sotheby's accounting nomenclature and a heretofore unknown precedent of Butts Jr.'s acquiring other Blakes at auction.

Typically, auction catalogues that record prices and buyers have corresponding columns drawn in the right margin of the page, or the catalogue page is inlaid into an account book with such columns drawn in (illus. 7 and 8). In a normal transaction, price and buyer were recorded in their proper columns. If an item was withdrawn, the lot number was crossed out and no price or buyer was recorded. Items bought in were recorded in various ways. In Sotheby's catalogues, like those of March and June 1852, the buy-in price was listed in the price column, no buyer's name was recorded, and the price was repeated to the right of the buyer's column. The buy-in price is the final bid reached from the floor but which falls below the reserve price, the price that the vendor informs the auctioneer is the lowest acceptable bid and which is kept secret. The buy-in price, repeated far right in a column of its own, identifies the item that failed to sell and is the price upon which the commission paid by the unsuccessful vendor is assessed.⁴³ In Butts Jr.'s June 1853 auction at Foster and Son, the buy-ins are recorded differently but the objective is the same. In the annotated copy of the catalogue at the Victoria and Albert Art Library, the buy-in price was recorded in the buyer's column, in place of a name, and the price column was left blank; in the annotated catalogue in the Frick Art Library, the price column was left blank, the buyer is recorded as "Thomas," a pseud-

⁴² Butlin suspects that Milnes acquired *The Repose* from Butts, "this watercolour [cannot] be found in the known Butts sales, but at least one sale remains untraced" (472). Rossetti records *The Repose* as belonging to Milnes and not Butts (209, #69)—which is understandable since Butts owned the tempera version (Butlin 405). Even Butlin finds duplicates in Butts's collection suspicious, noting that the watercolor is a "late addition to the series of watercolours of Biblical subjects" and "may well have been painted with another, or no, patron in mind" (472). On the other hand, there is precedent for Milnes's acquiring works from the Butts collection by private sale and for Butts's owning tempera and watercolor of the same subjects (see Butlin 415, 474, and Lot 167 in Appendix 1).

Lot No.	Description	Price	Buyer
155	"He cast him into the bottom" (ill.)—very powerful and characteristic	1. 10	Butts
156	Teaching the Clergy—many figures	1. 10	Butts
157	"Thus wast perfect ill inquiry was found in thee"—very fine	1. 10	Butts
158	Samson tearing his bonds	1. 10	Butts
159	The Bleeding Lamb	1. 10	Butts
160	The Man of God and Jacobson	1. 10	Butts
161	"Ist site are fugive"	1. 10	Butts
162	Scene from the Apocalyptic Vision—of great conception and highly characteristic	1. 10	Butts
163	"The Number of the Beast is 666"—of the same characteristic merit	1. 10	Butts
164	"And power was given him over all kinreds, and tongues, and nations"—equally characteristic	1. 10	Butts
165	Women taken in Adultery	1. 10	Butts
166	Which of Us?	1. 10	Butts
167	The Baptism of Christ—fully executed	1. 10	Butts
168	Creation of Light	1. 10	Butts
169	Baptism—very fine	1. 10	Butts
170	War	1. 10	Butts
171	Moses striking the Rock	1. 10	Butts
172	The Seven Golden Chandeliers	1. 10	Butts
173	Adam and Eve in Paradise	1. 10	Butts
174	"But hope extinkish'd only to Illuse"	1. 10	Butts
175	St. Paul striking off the Viper	1. 10	Butts
176	The Assumption—on alabaster and especially finished with the finest manner of this extraordinary artist and genius	1. 10	Butts
The six following Designs, by Blake, are illustrations of Milton's "Paradise Lost."			
177	"He judged he saw"	1. 10	Butts
178	"Fishes I thy word in part"	1. 10	Butts
179	"All quiete part"	1. 10	Butts
180	"Awake! awake! or be for ever fallen"	1. 10	Butts

8 Page 9, Sotheby's sale catalogue for Charles Ford's collection, 26 June 1852.

onym for Butts Jr., and the buy-in price is listed right of the buyer's column, as in the Sotheby catalogues.

Auction houses often bid prices up to their reserve by bouncing fictive bids "off the chandelier." But at Foster's, Butts Jr. appears to have bid the prices up himself, as "Thomas," at the risk of "buying" those lots when he was not outbid. The wide range in prices for the Blake material that "Thomas" bought suggests that Butts Jr. was bidding per lot rather than relying on a uniform reserve, say of £1 for mounted works of similar size and media.⁴⁴ He bought in a 27 x 38 cm tempera on copper (*The Nativity*) for 6s., but then let two temperas twice that size (*Eve Naming the Birds* and *Adam Naming the Beasts*), each approximately 75 x 62 cm, go for a mere 5s. apiece to William Stirling-Maxwell. For 19s. he bought in *Moses and Pharaoh's Daughter*, a nicely mounted watercolor of 32 x 32 cm, but he let the watercolors *Moses and the Burning Bush*, 39 x 30.4 cm, and *Saul and Samuel*, 32 x 33.4 cm, which were also professionally mounted, go for 7s. each. A few works were bought in for as

⁴³ In Sotheby catalogues, some buyers have the purchase prices repeated in the buy-in column. Because the duplication is used for the same buyers throughout a sale, the repeated price with a buyer's name appears to indicate a credit (see illus. 7).

⁴⁴ Reserves, of course, are never made public, but not all auctions have reserves; a few auctions at Foster and Son, for example, included properties advertised as being "without reserve" (see 2 July 1845, for example).

little as 2s. (lots 84 and 141, each lot containing three temperas(?) now untraced), while others cost Butts Jr. "Thomas" as much as 19s. and 17s. (lots 126 and 132).

Was Butts Jr. attempting to do the same at the Ford auction, to bid prices up at Sotheby's in June 1852? Did he buy in 19 watercolors? The accounting nomenclature clearly states that the Blakes sold as normal transactions, that they were bought and not bought in (illus. 7). Prices and buyer are listed in their proper columns and no prices are listed right of the buyer. If the Blakes were bought in, then how was Sotheby's auctioneer or accountant to know that? Three works in the Ford auction appear to have been bought in (lots 6, 28, and 108), and they were conventionally recorded: no buyer is listed and the price is recorded twice, in the price column and right of the buyer's column, and they were added up separately.

What indicates that the accounting nomenclature for Ford's auction can be trusted is the precedent of Butts Jr.'s buying *Comus* at Sotheby's on 5 July 1852, just nine days after the Ford sale, when he would surely have been informed about the upcoming July sale. The sale was four days long and included four vendors, but the first and primary vendor was Edward Vernon Utterson (1776?-1856), a well known and successful book and art collector.⁴⁵ He is not mentioned in Bentley's *Blake Books or Blake Records*, or in Butlin, yet he owned two illuminated books (*America, Book of Ahania*), two illustrated books (*The Grave*, two copies of *Night Thoughts*), and the second set of the *Comus* illustrations (see Appendix 2 for an annotated list of the Blakes sold in this auction), which Butts Jr. sold at Foster's in June 1853 and which, consequently, is assumed to have been commissioned by his father.

Utterson was a barrister practicing in the court of chancery. He was also an editor of early English works.⁴⁶ He was elected fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1807 and was an original member of the Roxburghe Club, founded in 1812, a few of whose members and friends also owned original works by Blake.⁴⁷ After 1835 he resided on the Isle of Wight, where he set up the Beldornie Press, 1840-43. "The Principal Portion of [his] Valuable Library" was sold at

⁴⁵ Three other vendors, whose properties are clearly identified in the catalogue, also participated in this four-day sale. The Blakes sold on the first day and were listed under "Quarto"; they belonged to the first and largest collection (lots 1-682), which is identified as Utterson's on the microfilm's introductory label, an identification supported by the inclusion of limited editions published by private clubs, like Abbotsford Club Books (lots 217-20) and Bannatyne Club Books (231-41), which Utterson assiduously collected. Lowndes misdates the auction as "1855," but he records the illuminated books and prices correctly (1: 216).

⁴⁶ For a list of books written and edited by Utterson, see his auction at Sotheby's, 20 March 1857, which is not listed in Lugt.

⁴⁷ James Boswell owned *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy U, the Duke of Devonshire owned *Poetical Sketches* copy S, Thomas Dibdin acquired a copy of *Songs of Innocence, The Book of Thel* copy J, and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* copy G, Richard Heber owned *Poetical Sketches* copy F, Earl Spencer acquired copy Q of *Night Thoughts*

Sotheby's on 19-26 April, 29 April-1 May, and 3 May 1852. The Blake works, though, were auctioned at Sotheby's on 5 July 1852, lots 248-53, as part of a "Catalogue of a Valuable Assemblage of Choice and Fine Books: including Some Rare Old English Poetry, and other interesting works, from the Library of an Eminent Collector, Omitted in the Previous Sale; Some Profusely Illustrated Books. . . ."

Butts Jr. purchased Utterson's copy of the 1808 edition of *The Grave* (lot 248) and the eight illustrations of Milton's *Comus* (lot 253). He did not purchase anything else from this four day sale, despite its inclusion of other illustrated books, an omission which is inconsistent with the hypothesis that Butts Jr. was the vendor of the print collection auctioned in March 1852. (The purchase of *The Grave* is particularly odd if Butts Jr. had been the vendor, because he would have sold a copy of the same edition for only five shillings and was now paying 13 shillings more than his own copy realized.) He paid £4 6s. for *Comus* and sold it and *The Grave* in June 1853 for a profit, the latter going to Wood for £2 2s. (lot 143) and the former to J. C. Strange for £6 6s. (lot 98). The first *Comus* series was finished c. 1801, commissioned and purchased by the Rev. Joseph Thomas (Butlin 527). The second series is assumed to have been executed for Butts because it was sold by his son, even though stylistic features suggest a c. 1815 date (Butlin 528), a period when Butts is conspicuously absent from Blake's affairs and no receipts for works are extant (see Viscomi, "Green House"). Could *Comus* have once belonged to Butts and been sold privately to Utterson? While this theory cannot be ruled out completely, it seems unlikely because the manner in which *Comus* designs were mounted differed considerably from the one usually used by Butts. They are now trimmed to the image and in modern mats, but they appear never to have been inlaid into larger window mounts like the biblical watercolors. The purchase and physical evidence (for more of which see below) suggest that the second series of *Comus* was not executed for Butts, but possibly for Utterson himself or for an unknown collector from whom Utterson acquired it. Rossetti records the provenance of *Comus* as "Mr. Strange, from Mr. Butts" (232, #205), apparently unaware of the Utterson sale. He was also unaware of Rev. Thomas's *Comus*, as well as his *Paradise Lost* and *Nativity* (see below).

Butts Jr.'s presence at the 5 July 1852 auction, his purchase of works by Blake, and his selling those works the following year support the idea that he had been a buyer at the June 1852 auction as well. For a Butts to buy Blakes at auction, however, was not unprecedented. A "Butts" acquired four

(a colored copy) and Hayley's *Ballads* of 1802, and Francis Douce acquired *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* copy B. Utterson may have learned of Blake through his friend Thomas Dibdin, whom Blake visited in 1816 to discuss the minor poems of Milton (see n74). It is interesting to note, though, that the lawyers John and George Shaddick, who in 1817 shared an office with George Butts, Butts's youngest son, worked in Utterson's office (Six Clerks Office, Chancery Lane) in 1819, according to *Robson's Directory* for that year.

illuminated books and a copy of *The Grave* from the George Cumberland sale of 6 May 1835 at Christie's. These books sold in the March 1852 auction.⁴⁸ The "Butts" who bought them was most likely Thomas Butts (Bentley, *Blake Books* 657); he was 75 years old at the time and was apparently in the habit of presenting his second wife, Elizabeth Delauney, with gifts (see Viscomi, "Green House"). Of course, Butts Jr., who was 47, might have been "Butts," as he was at the Utterson sale 17 years later. In any event, the act of buying Blake's books and watercolors in 1835 and 1852, years after Blake and Mrs. Blake died, means that Butts and/or his son were collecting Blake, that is, acquiring Blakes not out of the desire to help Blake financially but out of the desire to create or enrich a Blake collection.

Is it possible, then, that Butts Jr. was at the Ford auction buying Blakes that once belonged to his father in order to add them to his collection—a collection that was no longer synonymous with his father's? At first, the idea of his purchasing works seems suspect because he sold them just one year later along with similar kinds of Blakes. And buying Blakes seems especially suspect if he was selling them just a few months earlier, at the March 1852 auction. But, as noted, except for the Blakes, the collection sold in March 1852 does not appear to have been assembled by Butts Sr. or sold by Butts Jr. In other words, the June 1853 auction—the only auction that identifies Butts Jr. as the vendor—may have been his first. Its explicit cause was his "Removing from his Residence," a decision presumably made after the June 1852 auction, and possibly motivated by the enlistment of his son Frederick into the army in the spring of 1853.⁴⁹ Indeed, the March and June sales of 1852 may have given him the idea to put part of his Blake collection up for auction the following year. In short, he may have believed that Blake now had a public market.

The Market for Blake in 1852

The question of whether Butts Jr. was at Ford's auction in June 1852 as vendor or buyer can be answered by considering the sale catalogue's structure and its accounting nomenclature, the unlikelihood of Butts Jr.'s being the vendor of

⁴⁸ A Butts receipt records the purchase of a copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* from Blake for £6 6s. in September 1806 (Bentley, *Blake Records* 575). This copy (E) is assumed to be the one sold in the 26-27 March 1852 auction. There are no similar receipts for the copies of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (F) and *The Book of Thel* (L) sold in the March 1852 auction (see n27). The four illuminated books from the Cumberland sale of 1835 are *America* copy F, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* copy B, *Europe* copy D, and *Song of Los* copy D, which were bound together and sold with a copy of *The Grave* (lot 60). "Butts" purchased the lot for £3 18s. (Bentley, *Blake Books* 657). The four illuminated books were sold in the March 1852 auction (lot 54) to Palgrave for £11; *The Grave* sold to Toovey for five shillings (lot 61).

⁴⁹ I am not sure where Butts Jr. moved in 1852; he is recorded in directories after 1856 and in his will at 20 Chester Terrace, Regent Park.

the March 1852 auction, and the precedent of Butts Jr.'s buying Blakes at other auctions: he was there as buyer. And as buyer, he bid presumably to acquire Blakes, though he may also have bid to ensure that Blake's watercolors did not sell for too little, that is, to create the appearance of a Blake market, an illusion especially important to a collector who owned the world's largest Blake collection. But this fact was undoubtedly little known at the time, and the idea of manipulating the market for the future sale of Blakes raises serious questions, not the least of which is whether such a market existed.

The March 1852 auction, with 25 Blake watercolors realizing £48 7s.6d., was the first major sale of a collection of diverse Blake designs since Blake's own 1809 exhibition. It was followed by the Ford auction in June 1852, with 29 watercolors realizing £23 5s.6d., the Utterson auction of 5 July 1852, with eight *Comus* designs, two illuminated books, and three illustrated books realizing £11.18s. All three sales were at Sotheby's, where copy G of *Urizen*, Blake's most elaborately colored copy of this 28-page book, sold on 20 January 1852 for £8 15s. to Milnes (Bentley, *Blake Books* 182). Apparently, word was out: Blake could sell. The following year saw the Butts auction in June 1853 at Foster and Son, with 117 drawings and paintings, followed by a previously unrecorded auction at Sotheby's on 19 December 1853, in which copies of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *Book of Thel*, *Jerusalem*, and *The Book of Job* sold for £15 2s. from the collection of John Hugh Smyth Pigott (see Viscomi, *Book* 352). The next year saw the Joseph Hogarth auction of 7-30 June 1854 at Southgate and Barrett, with 78 works. The next extensive Blake collection that came to market included over 200 sketches, color prints, and watercolors, and two posthumous copies of *Songs*, which sold at Sotheby's on 29 April 1862. This auction is believed by Butlin to be Tatham's ("William Rossetti" 40 and throughout the catalogue raisonné), though Bentley always gives Tatham a question mark when referring to this auction (*Blake Books*, passim). Tatham is a logical choice because the auction included drawings and sketches, the very kind of works that might have remained in Blake's studio and that he would have inherited from Mrs. Blake. The problem is that in 1862 Tatham was corresponding with Rossetti, but Rossetti, who went to press after the Bicknell sale of 29 April - 1 May 1863 (which he refers to on 201, #5), does not know about this auction or many of the collectors there purchasing Blakes, like the painter Rowbotham. Clearly, he never saw a copy of the sale catalogue, recording only those works from the auction that had been purchased by dealers that he knew, like Palser and Harvey, who did not divulge the source of the material (see n12). The attribution of the 1862 auction to Tatham, like the attribution of the March 1852 to Butts Jr., makes sense until examined closely, when it begins to suggest yet another Blake collector unknown to us.

Blake's paintings apparently began changing hands publicly around 1852. Until the March 1852 sale at Sotheby's,

the Blake works that sold through auctions and dealers were primarily illuminated and illustrated books. Indeed, as Dorfman demonstrates, Blake was known—so far as he had any reputation at all—more as an illustrator than a painter. “During the 1850s in England a well-informed art critic of the younger generation would have known of William Blake only from Allan Cunningham’s generally unsympathetic account in his *Lives of the Painters* and the engraved designs to Robert Blair’s *The Grave*. Blake . . . seemed to be making his way to oblivion; those who remembered the man or had bought his works were settling into old age” (1). According to Cunningham, Blake “was a most splendid tinter, but no colourist, and his works were all of small dimensions, and therefore confined to the cabinet and the portfolio. His happiest flights, as well as his wildest, are thus likely to remain shut up from the world” (qtd. in Bentley, *Blake Records* 503). To Cunningham, Blake was a minor artist, ranked below Flaxman and Fuseli, of interest for his strange turn of mind, his engravings of Job, lyrical poetry, prophecies, and visionary heads. As noted, Gilchrist did not himself know of Blake or start on the biography until 1854, and there were no public exhibitions of Blake’s works or reproductions to challenge Cunningham.

With so little public knowledge and exchange of Blake’s paintings and drawings, Blake’s market value in March 1852 was still a mystery. Had Butts Jr. or Sotheby’s known in 1851 of previous auctions of Blake watercolors, which is unlikely, they might have been discouraged. Blake failed to sell his paintings at his exhibition of 1809. Likewise, Thomas Edwards of Halifax attempted and failed to sell the 537 *Night Thoughts* designs, which were comparable in size (42 x 32 cm) and medium to Butts’s biblical watercolors. These, the first watercolors brought to market by someone other than Blake, were offered in 1821 as one item for L300 (Butlin 330), which is approximately 11s.11d. per design. They were put up for auction in 1826 and 1828 and bought in both times, the latter time for only £52 10s. (Bentley, *Blake Books* 655), which means they failed to bring in even 2s. per design.

Also in 1828, Blake’s 117 illustrations to Gray’s *Poems*, the same size, medium, and period as the *Night Thoughts* designs, were sold at Flaxman’s auction for a mere £8 8s. (Butlin 335), which is about 1s.6d. per design. On 21 May 1830, however, two late and highly finished watercolors, *The Vision of Queen Katherine* and *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, both c. 1825 (Butlin 549, 481), sold at the Thomas Lawrence auction at Christie’s for £4 6s. and £8 15s respectively. These high prices are in part due to the splendor of these late designs, but may also be to the very good provenance of Lawrence himself, as well as to the high number of collectors and dealers in attendance.⁵⁰ But that was the last public sale of Blake watercolors until the auction in March 1852.

⁵⁰ The prices paid for the Blakes are especially high relative to pencil and chalk drawings by Fuseli, Flaxman, Gainsborough, Cosway, and Lawrence himself in this and Lawrence’s 17 June 1830 auction.

During that 22 year hiatus, a few more illuminated books sold—and did not sell. Bohn acquired *Jerusalem* copy F in 1837 for £3 18s. and *Milton* copy D bound with *Thel* copy O in 1838 for £5 12s.6d. (Bentley, *Blake Books* 130). These works were first listed in Bohn’s catalogue for 1841 but not sold till after 1847.

The size and shape of the market for Blake’s watercolors, then, began to emerge in March 1852. Nearly all the Blakes sold for over a pound, and a few sold for over two pounds, prices that may have prompted other collectors—or Butts Jr.—to sell their Blakes, not because these prices are high for Blake, since the absence of recent sales made that impossible to gauge, but because they sold for what other works comparable in size, medium, and age, as is evinced by the auctions of March and June 1852, as well as those of 21 and 29 June 1853 at Sotheby’s. These auctions included watercolors and wash drawings by Rowlandson, Martin, Evans, Cotman, Turner, DeWint, Gainsborough, Bonington, Prout, and Cox (see lots 82-85, 91, 92, 78, 79, 94, 105, 113, 123, 124 of the Ford auction). For example, in the Ford auction, “Landscape Composition in sepia, *highly finished*,” by J. Martin (lot 85) sold for 5s.; “A Landscape Sketch, in colours” by DeWint (lot 78) sold with a work by Vickers for 5s. If the March and June 1852 auctions are the context, then Briggs is certainly mistaken to accuse Butts Jr. of disliking Blake and selling “for a mere trifle a great many of the pictures” (93). Apparently, she inferred that Butts Jr. disliked Blake from his having sold Blakes for what seemed to be paltry sums. Relative to the prices commanded by watercolors by Blake’s contemporaries, though, the prices realized by Blake’s watercolors were fair.

With the Blake lots selling at the end of the Ford auction, with the tenor of the day established, with only three Ford items bought in, and with Blakes selling for as much as the other drawings and watercolors, would Butts Jr. buy-in 19 of 29 works? If he did, then clearly Blake failed to sell. If, however, as I believe is the case, Butts Jr. was buying, then Blake sold but for lower prices relative to March. Had Butts Jr. known about the March sale, he would have been in an advantageous position in the June 1852 sale, either as vendor or buyer. If there as vendor, then he bought in hoping that Blake could realize higher prices at a later date. If there as buyer, then he purchased works knowing that they were at good prices and might prove to be an investment. Speculating so, either as vendor or buyer, would have been risky—unless Butts Jr. suspected why the prices were lower than before.

At the March 1852 auction, four collectors and six dealers who were or would become interested in Blake were present: Arthington, Milnes, Palgrave, Dilke, Toovey, Bohn, Colnaghi, Evans, Palser, and Hogarth.⁵¹ At Butts’s June 1853 auction,

⁵¹ Arthington and Toovey bought illuminated books but no watercolors; Palser and Hogarth, dealers who acquired Blakes later in the decade, bought many Rowlandson drawings and other works but no Blakes that day. Still, they may have been part of the bidding.

nine collectors and dealers were present: Bohn, Sterling-Maxwell, Strange, Robinson, Mills, C. Martin, Money, Wood, and Colnaghi. Bohn was the main buyer in both these auctions.⁵² He and most of the other collectors appear to have been absent from Ford's June 1852 auction. Present, though, were Palser, W. Evans, Hogarth, Fuller, and Hickeson, who bought two Blake works from Ford (lot 11). So some competition was present, but clearly less than in March 1852 and June 1853.⁵³ None of these buyers purchased anything at Butts's March 1854 auction, which suggests that they were probably absent and may explain why the Blakes bought in by "Thomas" in June 1853 remained unsold. In any event, Butts may have reasoned in June 1852 that the low prices were not due to Blake but to the audience, and that the solution was to alter it. Apparently, this was done for the June 1853 auction, since, as noted, at least nine reputable collectors and dealers attended the auction and the prices, though not as high as the March 1852 sale, were higher by a few shillings per item than those of the Ford June 1852 sale.

Prices for Blake were a bit lower in June than March 1852 for similar works, probably due to the absence of serious buyers rather than to a severe revaluation of Blake. Prices were relatively low at the Utterson sale of 5 July 1852 as well, where Bohn and Evans were absent (or at least silent) on the day the Blakes sold. Utterson's illuminated books sold for prices close to those in March 1852, but his eight designs of *Comus* sold for less than the similarly-sized six designs of *Nativity* (£4 6s. versus £6 6s.). Given these low prices, the fact that Fuller paid more than a pound for each of his purchases in June 1852, while Butts paid less than a pound for his, may signify a more determined buyer instead of an owner secretly buying in. Whatever our opinion of the relative worth of Blake's works, Fuller clearly bought those works that were identified in the catalogue as being in Blake's "finest manner," works described as "very powerful and characteristic" and "of grand conception and highly characteristic."

The June 1852 Vendor Redux

Comparing Butts Jr.'s June 1853 auction with the March and June auctions of 1852 may not provide conclusive answers, but it brings into sharper focus the shape and size of Blake's emerging market before Gilchrist.

⁵² Relatively few of Bohn's Blake acquisitions had been resold by 1863, since Rossetti examined most of them in Bohn's collection. Whether this reflects the market, prohibitive prices, or an unwillingness to sell the works is not known.

⁵³ Palser, who bought a number of Blake works from the 29 April 1862 auction at Sotheby's, bought 22 works at Ford's 26 June 1852 auction, but no Blakes. Only twice did he spend more than a pound; he bought over 24 items in March 1852, but again was very conservative, spending more than a pound only four times. He was usually picking up what could be had for less than 10 shillings—which was considerable.

In Butts Jr.'s June 1853 sale, the Blakes were grouped in a very orderly manner. Lots 70-87 were temperas of various sizes; lots 88-92 were vertical watercolors; lots 93-97 were horizontal temperas; lots 98-139 were watercolors, and lots 140-42 were temperas. The main group of watercolors (lots 100-38) were bracketed by Milton illustrations, *Comus* and *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (lots 98-99) and nine from *Paradise Lost* (lot 139). The biblical watercolors acquired from Ford's June 1852 auction were not dispersed within the Butts collection—as one might expect if these works were returning home—but remained together. Though not in the same lot order as in the Ford auction, they formed a group within a group, like a series of recent acquisitions, selling in lots 103-15 (116? see lot 182x in Appendix 1).⁵⁴ The watercolors sold for more, on average, than the temperas: only three of possibly 35 temperas sold for more than £1 apiece, whereas 31 (including nine *Paradise Lost* illustrations) out of 82 watercolors (including 20 Milton illustrations) sold for more than £1 apiece.

The differences between the auctions of March and June 1852 and Butts Jr.'s auctions of June 1853 and March 1854 reflect different vendors and selling strategies. Only six items in the March 1852 auction were withdrawn and another four to eight bought in (see n20), which is less than 1%. Only three items appear to have been bought in in the June 1852 auction, which is less than 1%. In the June 1853 auction, 22% of the entire collection was bought in.⁵⁵ The Amateur's share of the June 1852 auction was at least the last 12 lots (16 items). If the 29 Blake watercolors belonged to the Amateur, then that property had at most 41 lots (46 items). To assume that this Blake-owning Amateur was Butts Jr. is to assume not only that buy-ins were recorded differently for this one sale and that precedent is inconsequential, but also that Butts Jr. bought in 65% of the Blakes he put up for sale but none of the non-Blake material.

All the material belonging to Butts Jr. in March 1854 came from his June 1853 auction, and nearly all of the items again failed to sell. The 17 Blakes sold in six lots (13-18), presumably to increase their chances of selling. Only two (now untraced) temperas sold (Butlin 397, 399), and those for only 5s.6d. apiece. The other works were bought in, at usually half the 1853 buy-in prices. Lowering the reserve for an item the second time it is auctioned was standard procedure. But it would not have been followed if Butts Jr. were the vendor of the June 1852 auction. In that auction, he bought *Satan in His Former Glory* for 10s.; if this were a

⁵⁴ The only work of the 19 watercolors from June 1852 not put up for auction in June 1853 was *Touching the Garment* (see Appendix 1, lot 156), now known as *Christ Healing the Woman with an Issue of Blood* (Butlin 482).

⁵⁵ In the 29 June 1853 auction, 69 drawings and paintings by various artists were sold in the first 62 lots, and 117 Blakes were sold in the subsequent 75 lots (see n14). Butts Jr. bought in 26 items from the first group (37%) and 17 from the second (14%), and two of these were theatre portraits believed to have been by Blake (see n16).

buy-in instead of a purchase (see Appendix 1, lot 157), then his buying it in June 1853 for 11s., i.e., at a higher reserve, makes little sense. In 1854 this drawing was again bought in, along with two others, for an average of 7s.

In the 1854 sale, the 17 Blakes unsold from the year before were given lower reserves, most failed to sell, but all kept the same titles. In the 1853 sale, 18 Blakes came from the June 1852 auction, all but one sold, nearly all realized higher prices than in 1852, and at least seven were retitled.⁵⁶ Titles are given to the auction house by the vendor; if Butts was the vendor of both the June 1852 and June 1853 sales, then why did he change titles of works bought in? If to conceal the earlier sale, then why change only a few and not all? Why not also change titles of the works resold in March 1854?⁵⁷

Behavior so different from that shown in the June 1853 auction strongly supports the bibliographical evidence supplied by the Ford catalogue, that Butts Jr. attended the Ford auction to buy Blakes that once belonged to his father (and possibly sold by another member of his family) for his own collection.

The Milton Illustrations in the Butts Collection

Six of the 12 1808 *Paradise Lost* designs were in the Ford auction (lots 177-82). They were placed under the subheading: "The six following Designs, by Blake, are illustrative of Milton's 'Paradise Lost.'" Three were acquired by Fuller and three by Butts (see Appendix 1). Their presence in the auction raises the question of initial provenance. Were these watercolors also once part of the original Butts collection,

⁵⁶ The work that failed to sell was *Satan in His Former Glory*; works whose titles were changed included *Witch of Endor*, changed to *Saul and Samuel*, and "*Her Sins Are Forgiven*," changed to *Jesus and Martha*. (See Appendix 1, lots 157, 158, 161, 166, 168, 172, 175.)

In March 1852, five works were titled by the quotes on their mounts; in June 1852, 12 (including six Milton designs) were so titled; but only one title is quoted from the mount in June 1853. Another similarity between the March and June auctions of 1852—which set them apart from Butts Jr.'s June 1853 auction—is the absence of temperas and color prints.

⁵⁷ The descriptions given to lots in these auctions also differ, though these may have been supplied by the auction house. Even so, they reveal how Blake was perceived at the time. In Butts Jr.'s 1853 auction, four Blakes are described minimally: (88) *The Last Judgment*, "an elaborate work"; (89) *The Fall of Man*, "a capital drawing"; (91) *Death on the Pale Horse*, "spirited"; and (137) *Queen Catherine's Dream*, "very fine." In the March 1852 auction, eight of 20 Blake lots were described, a few effusively: (147) *Milton's Nativity*, "six very beautiful and highly finished drawings"; (149) *The Blasphemer*, "sketched with great power and effect"; (163) *The Devil is Come Down*, "a fine characteristic example of the vigour and talent of the artist"; (165) *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, "admirably designed, and very fine"; (166) *The Vision of Queen Katherine*, "an elaborate and most beautifully finished drawing, the fantastic grouping of the flying figures being of the most admirable execution, and altogether a CHEF D'OEUVRE OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY ARTIST." The descriptions in Ford's June 1852 auction are closer to those of March than to those of June 1853. (See Appendix 1, lots 155, 156, 157, 162, 163, 164, 167, 169, 176.)

or were they acquired from other collectors? The evidence connecting the 1808 *Paradise Lost* set with Butts is strong though mostly circumstantial, not documentary. They were executed when Butts was Blake's "almost solitary purchaser" and sold in his son's June 1853 auction. Linnell commissioned Blake to reproduce the *Paradise Lost* drawings, recording on 9 April 1822 that Blake had begun to make them (Bentley, *Blake Records* 275). But no mention is made of an owner. Blake is assumed to have borrowed them from Butts, because it was from Butts that he borrowed the Job watercolors (and other works) so Linnell could prepare tracings for a second set.⁵⁸ The original style used to mount the nine *Paradise Lost* designs supports this assumption. These nine sold in June 1853 to J. C. Strange (lot 139 for £17 6s.6d.), who also acquired the eight *Comus* designs and nine biblical watercolors, along with the seven Shakespeare miniatures.

Strange's entire Blake collection was acquired by Bernard Quaritch and sold in 1890 to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, presented in three large red leather portfolios. Though the works have been trimmed of their original mounts, the mounting style of the larger works was almost certainly Butts's, as is evinced by the sizes of their portfolios and a few other factors. The original mounts were large sheets of thick paper that were tipped into the stubs of the portfolios; the portfolio for the biblical watercolors is the size of Turnbull mounts.⁵⁹ The biblical and *Paradise Lost* watercolors had been trimmed to the image and inlaid into windows cut in larger sheets, remnants of which are still visible, for the sheets were trimmed to about a quarter inch from the image. Although trimming would have removed any Turnbull stamp, biblical inscription, or text, traces of pencil in the lower right corner, where the inscription was written on the biblical watercolors, are visible on a few of the *Paradise Lost* mounts. The titles recorded by Rossetti for most of these designs were quotations from *Paradise Lost* (see Appendix 1, lots 177-82), which implies that inscriptions and verse references were once present on the mounts. These textual echoes, pencil traces, and the inlaying style itself strongly suggest that the six *Paradise Lost* illustrations sold by Ford were from the Butts collection.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Though there are no records, Butts must have lent Blake *The Vision of Queen Katherine* and *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* (Butlin 548, 478) as well, because the late versions executed for Lawrence and Linnell (Butlin 549, 479) are based on tracings from them.

⁵⁹ In Quaritch's advertisement of November 1886, the biblical watercolors are recorded as "mounted to the size of 22 in. by 17.1/2 in." (55.7 x 44.4 cm), which is the size of the Turnbull mounts on the other biblical watercolors (see n19); the *Paradise Lost* designs were "mounted to the size of 28 in. by 20 in." (70.9 x 50.6 cm). The *Comus* designs were "mounted to the size of 11 in. by 8.1/2 in." (27.2 x 21.4 cm); there are no traces on the *Comus* designs to indicate they had previously been drum mounted.

⁶⁰ The three designs acquired by Fuller have been removed from their original mats.

The sale of the *Paradise Lost* designs at the Ford auction helps to explain why critics like Rossetti and Joseph Wittreich have assumed that Blake intended the series to be just nine instead of 12 designs. Rossetti records Fuller's three acquisitions in the order and with the titles of the Ford sale, but places them among the *Poetic and Miscellaneous* works (255, #16-18), outside the *Paradise Lost* series. Butts Jr. apparently added his three *Paradise Lost* designs to six he already had, for in June 1853 he sold "Nine from Milton." Rossetti records them in slightly more detail: "Nine Designs from 'Paradise Lost' [Mr. Strange, from Mr. Butts]" (209, #75). He appears to identify the nine designs as constituting the entire series, or at least not to have recognized the true size of the series. He had not seen the Fuller designs and was unaware of the 1807 *Paradise Lost* that belong to the Rev. Joseph Thomas (Butlin 529).⁶¹ Gilchrist, however, may have known that the series had been dispersed. He states: "the *Paradise Lost*, executed for Mr. Butts, . . . are now scattered in various hands" (1: 335).

While the 1808 series originally consisted of 12 designs, like the smaller set of 1807, Butlin believes that *Satan, Sin, and Death* may have been "done on its own before Blake thought of doing his two series of illustrations," because the "form of the signature, a near monogram, is common in works up to 1806 but rare later" (536.2). Wittreich, however, has argued that this design, along with *Satan Arousing the Rebel Angels* and probably *The Judgment of Adam and Eve*—the three designs acquired by Fuller—were never intended by Blake to be part of the series. Wittreich, in other words, like Rossetti, identifies the series as the nine designs that Butts Jr. sold in his June 1853 auction, and thus argues that the series remained intact and was never dispersed ("Illustrator" 99-103; *Angel* 92-97).⁶² It seems, however, that the nine designs sold by Butts Jr. may have been *reassembled* by Butts Jr. after the series had already been dispersed and cannot be regarded as the size of the series intended by Blake.

Butlin supposes that Butts Jr. dispersed the set by selling Fuller three designs from an "untraced sale" (536; see also "Minute Particular" 45). But that assumes what seems increasingly unlikely, that Butts Jr. was the vendor of the Blake works in Ford's June 1852 auction. If Butts Jr. was the vendor in June 1852, why did he auction only six and not the whole set? That is, why would he have withheld six in 1852 but put up nine—all that he had—the following year? More troubling still, why sell them as individual designs (lots 177-82) instead of as a series in one lot, as he did in 1853 (lot 139)? The former auction was at Sotheby's and the latter

was at Foster and Son, but the decision to sell as one lot was probably made by the vendor and not the auction house. The six *Nativity* designs, for example, sold as one lot at Sotheby's in March 1852 (lot 147). Dividing a series of 12 large illustrations may be yet another sign that the Butts collection had been partly dispersed before 1852 and not inherited in its entirety by Butts Jr.⁶³

While the 1808 *Paradise Lost* designs were part of the original Butts collection, the late series of Milton illustrations executed c. 1816 may not have been. After December 1810, there are no receipts or documentary evidence to prove that Butts continued his patronage of Blake (see Bentley, *Blake Records* 578). Indeed, 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, does lend credence to Gilchrist's theory. No implied or explicit reference to Butts is made in Blake's correspondence until Blake borrowed the Job watercolors from Butts for Linnell, for which Butts received a discount on a proof copy of the engravings in 1826 (Bentley, *Blake Records* 599). Blake also noted that Butts had paid him a visit in the spring of 1826 (Erdman 777).⁶⁴ Yet the presence of *Comus, Nativity, L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso* (Butlin 528, 542, 543) in the Butts collection appears to refute Gilchrist. Consequently, these works are believed, "in the absence of concrete evidence to the contrary," to have been designed for and/or commissioned by Butts (Butlin 550). But given that *Comus* was acquired by Butts Jr. from Uttersson's auction, the hypothesis that Butts commissioned the other series of Milton illustrations is also suspect.

Nativity sold in the March 1852 auction. Most of the Blake items in this auction appear to have been originally purchased by Butts directly from Blake. At least five items, however, were not purchased directly; these were the four illuminated books and a copy of *The Grave* that "Butts" purchased at the 1835 Cumberland sale (see n48). Other Blake works purchased from a third party, possibly by the vendor

⁶³ A similar situation occurred with the Linnell copies of Blake's *Paradise Regained*. These brilliantly and persuasively executed works are attributed to James T. Linnell, though they may be by John Linnell (see Essick, "Marketplace, 1994" 141). Six descended through James Linnell's family and six descended through the family of John Linnell Jr., though five of these are now untraced.

⁶⁴ 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 part of this sale, they are assumed to be 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 watercolors in 1821, or three of the *Paradise Lost* designs in May 1822 (Bentley, *Blake Records Supplement* 105-06). The most one can say, perhaps, is that after 1820 Butts and Blake were on good terms but Butts seems not to be actively adding to his collection or trying to support Blake financially.

⁶¹ When Fuller's three designs from *Paradise Lost* sold at Munro's auction at Christie's 22-24 April 1868 (lots 502, 501, 500), they were titled as in the June 1852 and Rossetti catalogues, that is, by quotations, but their connection to the series was again overlooked.

⁶² Wittreich now concedes that *The Judgment of Adam and Eve* in the Houghton Library can be added to the nine designs of Butts's in the Boston Museum (Butlin, "Minute Particular" 44).

rather than by Butts, include a posthumous copy of *Jerusalem* and probably the copies of *Night Thoughts* and *The Book of Job* engravings.⁶⁵ Given such precedent, it seems reasonable to suspect that the vendor may also have acquired the *Nativity* designs from a collection other than Butts's, or that they were another late addition to the Butts collection, purchased by the Butts who attended the Cumberland sale or by Butts Jr., who attended the Utterson sale.

L'Allegro and *Il Penseroso* seem to be the only uncontested set of late Milton illustrations in the Butts collection. But these companion pieces are not all that they seem. They sold with the Butts collection in Butts Jr.'s June 1853 auction, which included *Comus* and *The Grave* from the Utterson sale and 17 watercolors once belonging to his father but probably purchased at the Ford auction. The precedent of a Butts purchasing Blakes after Blake's death and of Butts Jr. at Utterson's and apparently Ford's auctions raises the possibility that these Milton illustrations were not commissioned for Butts but acquired by Butts Jr. or a family member from another, unknown collector or patron. The omission of *Paradise Regained* from the Butts collection suggests as much. Its omission is curious, as Butlin acknowledges (550), since it was executed in the same style and with the same materials as these other late series.

Paradise Regained, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Nativity*, and *Comus* are dated between c. 1815 and 1820. An examination of the paper used in these series, however, strongly indicates that it came from the same stack of sheets, which in turn suggests that the four series were executed as a group very near in time to one another. The 14 leaves of *Nativity* and *Comus* are without watermarks and are trimmed to the images, approximately 15.8 x 12.3 cm and 15.4 x 12 cm respectively. Six of the 12 leaves of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* and three of the 12 leaves of *Paradise Regained* are watermarked M & J LAY 1816, approximately 16 x 12 cm and 17 x 13 cm respectively. The six marked leaves in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* indicate six sheets, which quartered yield 24 leaves in four stacks (6 leaves per quarter stack). Two stacks of quarter leaves—one with the watermark—were apparently used. The other two stacks of (12) unmarked quarter leaves plus two leaves from a seventh sheet (the leaf with the

⁶⁵ There are no good reasons to believe that Butts owned duplicates of *Night Thoughts* and *The Book of Job*—or that the vendor of the March 1852 auction, whose Blake holdings constituted a very small portion of his collection, had not acquired his copies from someone other than Butts. Butts Jr. sold a copy of *Night Thoughts* in his June 1853 auction (lot 143) and another copy remained in Captain Butts's collection (Butts 164), though this copy may have been the "20 pages of proofs in various states, some written on by W. Blake" that sold in the Captain's 1903 auction (lot 22). Linnell records Butts as having acquired one proof copy of *The Book of Job* for half price "because he lent the Drawing to Copy," but it is the only copy of *The Book of Job* he is recorded as having acquired (Bentley, *Blake Records* 599). This copy is presumably the one that sold in the 1903 auction (lot 21), which was described as "the superb india proof copy (no. 1), morroco." Blake did not number copies of *Job*, but the Butts's copy may have been numbered by Butts or a descendant to signal his having received preferential treatment.

watermark was used elsewhere) were used for *Comus* and *Nativity*.⁶⁶ The 12 *Paradise Regained* designs were probably executed last but to match the earlier designs. Their place in the sequence of production is suggested by the facts that their 12 leaves came from three sheets quartered and all three watermarked quarters are in this series. The paper for this project, in other words, appears to have been purchased especially for it, whereas the 24 quarters of the six sheets used in the other three series were intermixed.

Comus and *Nativity* are the same size and were signed "WBlake," features which seem intentional, which in turn suggests that they were executed as companion works for the same patron. The same may be true of the other two series, which are both "WBlake inv" and 12 designs each. The image size of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, however, appears to have been determined by *Comus* and *Nativity*, presumably the first two series executed, and is slightly smaller than its companion series, *Paradise Regained*, whose 12 designs have "a second drawn border" (Butlin 544), making them appear slightly larger. It is also the only one of the series that has no record of having been accompanied by descriptions or poems.⁶⁷

Butts may have known of the Thomas series of *Paradise Lost*, executed in 1807. Thomas (1765-1811) was a friend of Flaxman and resided in Epsom (see Parris 1390), where Butts appears to have had a cottage or summer home by 1809.⁶⁸ Butts certainly knew of Flaxman, since Blake mentions him often in his letters, and probably had met him as well, since Flaxman lived at 7 Buckingham Street, Fitzroy Square and Butts moved to the Square in 1808. If Butts knew Thomas and his collection, then the *Paradise Lost* designs of 1808, a year after the Thomas set was executed, may have been Butts's idea and not Blake's. But if so, why would Butts have waited until c. 1816 to order copies of *Comus* and *Nativity*, both of

⁶⁶ The Milton illustrations are now trimmed to the image, but six sketches with the same watermark and same image size are on paper measuring 22.7 x 19.4 cm (8.15/16 x 7.1/2 inches) (see Butlin 712, 715, 768, 830, 832). This larger measurement is probably the size of an untrimmed quarter leaf used for the Milton illustrations. The size of the untrimmed sheet may have been 18.5 x 14.5 inches, which corresponds to "Pinched Post" drawing paper (see Labarre 251).

⁶⁷ *Nativity* was lot 147 of the 26-27 March 1852 auction and sold "with the poem in MS." *Comus* sold as lot 98 in the 29 June 1853 auction "with the artist's descriptions"; and *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* sold in the same auction as lot 99 as "ditto." What is meant by "ditto" is unclear; poems in manuscript and not descriptions are extant, and they are the only accompanying texts extant from the series. There is no record of *Paradise Regained* having accompanying descriptions or texts. There is a record, made by Thomas Dibdin, of a visit paid to him by Blake in 1816 to discuss "the minor poems of Milton" (Bentley, *Blake Records* 242). Perhaps this was the stimulus to reproduce *Comus* and *Nativity* and to execute the new series. In this light, it is interesting to note that Dibdin and Utterson were friends, both original members of the Roxburgh Club.

⁶⁸ Butts Jr. wrote his mother on 14 August 1809 to tell her that he visited the Blakes, as "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" (qtd. in Wilson 96n).

which were in Thomas's collection by 1801 and 1809 respectively?

The designs of the 1808 *Paradise Lost* are 50.7 x 38.2 cm, twice the size of the 1807 designs. While the first and second sets of *Paradise Lost* differ in many compositional details, Blake clearly had the 1807 compositions in mind (though probably no longer in the studio) when redrawing the series for Butts. The increased size was probably influenced by the patron, whose collection consisted primarily of large biblical watercolors and color prints, and who acquired works the same size in 1806 and 1807 (see Butlin 639, 641). Given the large size of the *Paradise Lost* designs, it seems unlikely that the *Paradise Regained* designs, at one quarter the size, were initially produced for Butts. Blake, or a patron other than Butts, of course, would not have perceived the new *Paradise Regained* designs as the companion of another series of designs. The c. 1816 *Comus* and *Nativity* designs, which are clearly new compositions based on the texts, are smaller than the Thomas sets. They too seem equally out of place in the Butts collection, and much smaller than the Butts watercolors.

Paradise Regained appears at first to be oddly missing from the Butts collection, or to be a work rejected by Butts (Bindman, *Catalogue* 38). But it may never have been intended for Butts. *Paradise Regained* remained with Blake, presumably because it was executed on speculation and not by commission. Linnell purchased the series for 10 pounds in October and November 1825 (Bentley, *Blake Records* 604), apparently to assist Blake financially.

How much later *Paradise Regained* was executed than *Comus*, *Nativity*, and *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* is not known. The shared style and materials suggest that it was not very long and that it was meant to be part of a Milton project. Yet it seems clearly not designed for Butts. Its omission from the Butts collection seems to reflect Blake's decision not to offer or design it for Butts. Had Butts acquired the other four Milton series, then the absence of *Paradise Regained* would indeed be surprising, since the series would then have matched in size and subject works he had been assiduously collecting. Conversely, the absence of *Paradise Regained* from the collection suggests that the matching Milton illustrations may also have been for another collection.⁶⁹ No hard evidence exists, however, to prove that Butts was the patron. Instead, he is assumed to have commissioned the c. 1816 Milton illustrations because they sold with his collection at auction. As an examination of Isaac D'Israeli's Blake collection proves, ownership is not identical with commission (Viscomi, "Myth" passim).

⁶⁹ That the second set of *Nativity* initially had descriptions reinforces Butlin's argument that this series is after, and not, as C. H. Collins Baker, Robert Wark, and Stephen Behrendt believe, before the Thomas series (see Butlin 538). But the size and materials alone place it with the later illustrations. The c. 1816 *Nativity*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso* have been cleaned and remounted and evidence of the original mounts is missing.

Conclusion

The sale of Blake watercolors long suspected as being from an untraced Butts auction occurred at Sotheby's on 26 June 1852, but the vendor appears to have been Charles Ford and not Butts Jr. The Blakes in the sale included two unrecorded drawings or sketches (lot 11) that may have been proofs from *Night Thoughts*, 23 biblical watercolors, and six watercolors from the 1808 *Paradise Lost* series. The watercolors were once part of the Butts collection, as receipts between Blake and Butts and a mounting style characteristic of the Butts collection indicate. Nineteen of the Blake watercolors were acquired by Butts Jr.; the structure of the sale and the accounting nomenclature of the Ford sale catalogue strongly suggest that these transactions were purchases and not buy-ins. Eighteen of these works were sold with a large portion of the Butts collection the following year, on June 1853 at Foster and Son.

For Ford's previously unrecorded auction to have material from the Butts collection indicates that the collection was dispersed earlier than 1852 (Butlin p. 336) and not necessarily by Butts Jr. It also indicates that Ford collected Blake and may have acquired his Blakes from a member of the Butts family. The presence of Blakes once belonging to Butts in Ford's collection forces a reexamination of the much larger auction of 26-27 March 1852 at Sotheby's, which was of a "Valuable Collection . . . From the Portfolio of An Amateur," who has heretofore been identified as Butts Jr. because the sale included Blakes that once belonged to his father. If the Blakes were put up for sale by Butts Jr., then that fact, or the fact that these particular works constituted another property, would have been acknowledged on the title page, in the catalogue, or in Sotheby's annotated catalogue. The works not belonging to the anonymous "Amateur" were so acknowledged. Hence, it is reasonable to suppose that the Amateur's collection once belonged to Butts and Butts, Jr. If so, then our idea of Butts's relation to Blake is very mistaken. His taste was more diverse and his art collection far more extensive than Blake's biographers have realized. If, however, Butts was as Gilchrist and Briggs depicted him, a man devoted more to Blake than to his art or to art in general, then Butts was not the person who assembled the collection. To assume that Butts Jr. was the vendor not by inheritance but by nature of his passion for collecting ignores his taste as demonstrated in his auction of June 1853. Apparently, Butts's illuminated books and biblical watercolors began to be dispersed before 1852, and Blake may have had major collectors unknown to us, including Charles Ford and the anonymous "Amateur" of the March 1852 auction.

One such previously unknown collector is E. V. Utterson, at whose sale on 5 July 1852 Butts Jr. acquired the second series of *Comus*. This purchase, along with four illuminated books from the Cumberland sale of 1835, indicates that Butts Jr. and/or another member of the family continued to collect Blake, which in turn challenges the theory that Butts

commissioned directly from Blake "replicas of Blake's Milton series" (Butlin p. 336). The last five series of Milton illustrations were executed c. 1816 and possibly for the same patron. That patron, however, was not necessarily Butts.

Did Rossetti know something about the Ford auction that we do not? He knew the sale catalogue but he did not identify the vendor. By "Mr. Fuller, from Mr. Butts," Rossetti acknowledged only that the works sold once belonged to Butts, which is true. He did not necessarily mean that they passed from Butts to Butts Jr. to Fuller, or that the auction in which they sold had been Butts Jr.'s. His stated intention was "to specify which were once [Butts's], even in the instances where they have passed out of the family" (Gilchrist 2: 199). He was, in other words, interested in listing first owners and, when possible, present owners, but not intermediate owners. Had he known that Ford or the Amateur owned the Blakes in 1852, he would not have noted it; nor would Rossetti have noted the ownership of Butts Jr. or another member of the family, since he equated relatives and descendants with Butts. His recording Fuller's acquisitions as being "from Mr. Butts" reveals only that he knew the provenance of the Blakes sold by Ford. He may have been told this by Gilchrist or Haines, whose lists of Blake's works he inherited, or he may have inferred Butts's ownership from the biblical subjects of the watercolors and from titles that echo those in Butts's account (Gilchrist 2: 256). As noted, these features alone connect the June 1852 watercolors to Butts, whether the vendor was Ford or the Amateur. Or he may have used an annotated copy of the sale catalogue and assumed that the "Butts" listed in the buyer's column was Butts Jr. buying in. We cannot be sure that he made this assumption, but, if he did, it needs to be pointed out that it is only an assumption, for Rossetti appears to have had no correspondence with Butts Jr., nor, it seems, did Gilchrist, Anne Gilchrist, Dante Rossetti, or Haines. As we have seen, the assumption is as problematic as it is appealing.

Examining the three auctions at Sotheby's in March, June, and July of 1852 simultaneously reveals and challenges several basic assumptions about the manner in which Blake worked and was collected. Revealed as well is how little we know about Butts and his family, despite their importance in sustaining Blake in his lifetime and, through the dispersal of Blakes from Butts's remarkable and splendid collection, his aesthetic reputation afterwards. The "facts" that lie behind the construction of provenances often reveal themselves to be tenuous assumptions when examined closely. I think that the attribution of the anonymous and Ford auctions of March and June 1852 to Butts Jr. is one such assumption.

Appendix 1

The following is an annotated list of the Blake works sold at Sotheby's on 26 June 1852.

Lot 11. W. Blake. *The Transfiguration, coloured*; and *Time with the hour glass*.

The works were bought for 1s.6d. by a "Hickeson." Rossetti and Butlin list no such person, though Butlin lists a Mrs. E. J. Hickson, daughter of Albin Martin, a pupil of Linnell who emigrated to New Zealand (p. 409). Hickeson or Hickson bought 16 other lots in the auction and may have been a dealer, though no picture or printdealer by that name is listed in the *London Post Office Directory* for 1852. A stationer-bookseller named Edward Hickson, however, is listed.

This lot differs from lots 155-82x in consisting of two items and in being listed outside that group of watercolors. A watercolor entitled *The Transfiguration*, c. 1800, had sold in the auction of March 1852, lot 153, to Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, who, according to Rossetti, still owned it in 1863 (226, #140). What sold in the Ford auction may have been another version, now untraced. It is probably not the untraced "rough suggestion for a design of the *Transfiguration*," which Rossetti notes was on the back of "Jacob and the Angel" (246, #71; Butlin 332), since that was apparently an uncolored sketch. The second item, *Time with the hour glass*, is not described as colored and may have been a pencil drawing, perhaps the untraced pencil drawing shown in 1876 at the Burlington Fine Arts Club exhibit (#245), listed as "A Life Study: Time" (12.3/4 x 17.1/2 in., lent by A. Macmillan). Butlin refers to this work as *A Life Study: Time* (866); Rossetti does not list it in 1863, but in 1880 he lists this work as "Time" and "A Life-study" (274, #189 and #190).

But lot 11 also differs from the others (except lots 173, 174, and 182x) in being the only works in the "Sale-catalogue" omitted (as opposed to renamed, which 173 and 182x may have been) by Rossetti. This omission, and their being grouped together and set apart, along with the very low price of 1s.6d for two works, suggest that they may have been sketches for or proofs of etchings from *Night Thoughts* (16.1/2 x 12.7/8 inches). Page 65 of *Night Thoughts* pictures the resurrected Christ, which could understandably be interpreted as the transfiguration. (A proof of this plate was used in *Vala*, p. 114). Page 24 of *Night Thoughts* pictures the allegorical figure of Time and an hour glass. (Proofs of this plate were used in *Vala*, pages 53 and 71).

Lot 155. "He cast him into the bottomless pit" —*very powerful and characteristic*

C. 1803-05. Purchased by Fuller for £1 5s. (Rossetti 229, #174). Butlin refers to it as "*He Cast Him into the Bottomless Pit, and Shut Him Up*" (524). See lots 162-64.

Lot 156. *Touching the Garment—many figures*

C. 1803-05. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 10s., but not sold at either of his subsequent auctions. It was acquired by William Smith by 1863, presumably from the Butts family by private sale, and given to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1871. Rossetti refers to it as *The Woman touching Christ's Garment*, and he describes it as "A composition of many figures, disfigured by lankiness. Not a superior specimen" (227, #149). Butlin refers to the work as *Christ Healing the Woman with an Issue of Blood* (482).

Lot 157. "Thou wast perfect till iniquity was found in thee"—*very fine*

C. 1805. Purchased by Butts for 10s. and offered in his June 1853 and March 1854 auctions as *Satan in his former Glory*, but bought in both times, first by "Thomas" for 11s. and then for 10s. with two other works (Butlin 497, 498). In 1863 it belonged to Captain Butts. Rossetti records the work twice, by the title in the Butts's June 1853 auction (255, #13 ["Mr. Thomas, from Mr. Butts"]) and by the title in the June 1852 sale. The latter he describes as "bright in colour and extremely grand" (230, #181). The title as inscribed on the mount, though, was "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou was created, till iniquity was found in thee" (Robertson 60). Butlin gives the title as *Satan in His Original Glory: "Thou Wast Perfect Till Iniquity was Found in Thee"* (469). Of the 18 works from this sale put up for auction in June 1853, this was the only one bought in.

Lot 158. Samson bursting his bonds

C. 1800-03(?). Purchased by Butts Jr. for 11s. and presumably sold at his June 1853 auction, lot 105, as *Samson and Delilah*, for 12s. to J. C. Strange. Butlin refers to it as *Samson breaking his bonds* (453). In his account with Butts, 12 May 1805, Blake mentions *Samson break[ing] bonds* [#8], which was paired with *Samson subdu'd* [#9] (Bentley, *Blake Records* 572). Lot 158 and Butts's lot 105 are probably different titles for the same work, now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, which seems, "for stylistic reasons, to have been executed earlier, c. 1800-03," than its presumed 1805 delivery date (Butlin 453). On the other hand, one or the other may have been the untraced watercolor referred to by Keynes as *Samson breaking his bonds* (*Bible* 51b) and by Butlin as *Samson and the Philistines* (454). It has been untraced since 1905, when it belonged to Marsden J. Perry, the printer at the Kelmescott Press.⁷⁰ Butlin acknowledges that this untraced painting may have been the watercolor listed c. 1865 by the dealer Francis Harvey as *Samson breaking his bonds* (454). Rossetti does not mention *Samson and the Philistines*, or *Samson and Delilah*; he refers to a watercolor by the June 1852 sale catalogue title, dating it 1805 and noting that "Delilah . . . stares in dismay at the upshot of her conspiracy" (208, #59). If *Samson and Delilah* was the work Ford sold in June 1852, then the untraced version acquired by Perry may have been the *Samson break[ing] bonds* delivered to Butts in 1805—and another of his works that was sold privately.⁷¹

Lot 159. The Burning Bush

C. 1800-03. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 10s. and sold at his June 1853 auction, lot 104, to Bohn for 7s. Butts refers to the watercolor by the June 1852 title; Rossetti and Butlin refer to it as *Moses at the Burning Bush* (224, #116; 441).

Lot 160. The Man of God and Jeroboam

C. 1803-05. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 6s. and sold at his

June 1853 auction, lot 106, to Bohn for 7s. Butts and Rossetti refers to it by the June 1852 title (225, #129); Butlin refers to it as *Jeroboam and the Man of God*, since "the Man of God's only action was in fact to entreat the Lord to restore Jeroboam's arm" (460).

Lot 161. "Her sins are forgiven"

C. 1803-05. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 6s. and sold at his June 1853 auction, lot 115, to Bohn for 11s. Butts listed it as *Jesus and Martha*, but Rossetti refers to it by the June 1852 title, adding "for she loved much" to the title and listing Bohn as owner (227, #146). Butlin refers to it as *Mary Magdalene Washing Christ's Feet* (488).

Lot 162. Scene from the Apocalyptic Vision—*of grand conception and highly characteristic*

Lot 163. "The Number of the Beast is 666"—*of the same characteristic merit*

Lot 164. "And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations"—*equally characteristic*

Three of the four paintings depicting the Red Dragon of the Apocalypse purchased by Fuller for £1 2s., £1 1s., and £1 1s. respectively. Rossetti records them as "Mr. Fuller, from Mr. Butts" and "Described in the Sale-catalogue as 'of grand conception, and highly characteristic'" and "of the same characteristic merit" and "equally characteristic" (229, #175, 177, 176). Lot 162 is commonly known as *The Great Red Dragon and The Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Butlin 519); lot 163 is still called *The Number of the Beast is 666* (Butlin 522); lot 164 is now entitled *The Great Red Dragon and The Beast from the Sea* (Butlin 521). These three watercolors, along with *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun: "The Devil is Come Down"* (Butlin 520), "seem to have been painted as a separate sub-group within the series of Biblical watercolours for Thomas Butts," c. 1803-05. Bindman dates them c. 1805-09 (164-65). Butlin further suggests that numbers "520 and 522 also form a pair of matching designs within the group of four" (519). Lot 155 of the June 1852 auction, "*He Cast Him into the Bottomless Pit*" (Butlin 524), which pictures Michael binding the Dragon, is also associated with this group and was also purchased by Fuller.

Lot 165. Woman taken in Adultery

C. 1805, was purchased by Butts Jr. for 5s. and sold at his June 1853 auction, lot 114, to J. C. Strange for 11s. (Rossetti 227, #147; Butlin 486).

Lot 166. Witch of Endor

C. 1800. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 7s. and is probably the version sold at his June 1853 auction, lot 112, to Bohn for 7s., as *Saul and Samuel*. Rossetti refers to the Foster item as *The Ghost of Samuel appearing to Saul*, but notes that "the Witch of Endor is wonderfully fine" (225, #124). Butlin refers to it by the same title as Rossetti (458). Two other less likely possibilities for lot 166 are *The Witch of Endor Raising the Spirit of Samuel*, 1783, and *Saul and the Ghost of Samuel*, c. 1775-80. The provenances of these works are not known before 1854 (Butlin 74, 75).

Lot 167. The Baptism of Christ—*finely conceived*

C. 1803. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 5s. In his June 1853 auction, two works with this title were sold: lot 113 to J. C. Strange for 19s., and lot 73 to Strange for £1 2s. (Butlin 475, 415). The second version was painted in tempera, which

⁷⁰ Three other works once belonging to Perry and shown at the Grolier Club exhibition of 1905 are also untraced: Butlin 181, 860, 861. Perry also acquired from Quaritch after 1900 *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* copy H, *Europe* copy G, and *Song of Los* copy C (Bentley, *Blake Books* 475).

⁷¹ Perry also acquired *The Last Judgment*, c. 1809, another work that can be traced to Butts but to no intermediate owners or sales (Butlin 645).

Rossetti refers to as *The Baptism of Christ* (226, #138); he refers to the watercolor version as "The same" (226, #139). Apparently, one of these two works came from the June 1852 sale. Rossetti saw both versions of *The Baptism of Christ* in Strange's collection, which enabled him to identify media. Given that all the other "Original Drawings in Colours, by Blake" in the June 1852 auction were watercolors, lot 167 probably followed suit.

Lot 168. Creation of Light

C. 1800-05(?). Purchased by Butts Jr. for 6s. and sold at his June 1853 auction, lot 111, to C. Martin for 18s. as *The Creation*. Untraced since 1853. Rossetti lists it as *Creation of Light*, but does not describe it or record an owner (223, #104), presumably because he never saw it. Rossetti apparently used the June 1852 sale catalogue for the title and provenance, since he fails to record Martin as owner.⁷²

Lot 169. Baptism—very fine

Dated 1805. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 8s. and presumably sold at his June 1853 auction, lot 110, to Bohn for £1 15s., as *Baptism*. The painting described by Rossetti (207, #52) and Butlin (485) depicts Christ baptizing (as opposed to being baptized), which is the title of the design Blake delivered to Butts 12 May 1805 (*Christ Baptizing*, #7). But the work delivered to Butts in 1805 was possibly a tempera, matching his tempera of *The Baptism of Christ*. The medium of tempera is suggested by Blake's touching up the work later that year for £1 1s.—which is what an original watercolor cost (Bentley, *Blake Records* 573). The reworking and price suggest a painting more substantial than pen and watercolor—and more susceptible to cracking and peeling, particularly if it were painted on copper. Rossetti seems equally puzzled about the extant watercolor version: the "colour is pale and sweet," yet Blake's "account" (i.e., the reworking for £1 1s.) "seems to show that more than usual pains were bestowed upon this water-colour" (207, #52), implying that the watercolor does not reflect this special attention, which in turn suggests that the work delivered to Butts in 1805 was a tempera now untraced (or completely deteriorated) and that the watercolor was lot 167.

Lot 170. War

Dated 1805. Purchased by Fuller for £1 3s. Recorded by Butlin as "Thomas Butts; Fuller by 1863; H. A. J. Munro, sold Christie's 22-4 April 1868 . . . Fogg Museum" (195). *War* is the third version of *A Breach in a City Wall the Morning after the Battle*; the two earlier versions are both c. 1784 and have provenances unknown before 1863 (Visconti, "A Breach" 44 passim). The version of the subject sold in lot 170 is probably the one delivered to Butts on 12 May 1805 (Bentley, *Blake Records* 572; Butlin 195), the period for all the other works in the auction.

Lot 171. Moses striking the Rock

Purchased by Butts Jr. for 4s.6d. and presumably sold at

his June 1853 auction, lot 108, for 15s. to Bohn (Rossetti 207, #53; Butlin 445). Blake delivered a watercolor with this title to Butts on 12 May 1805, which is most likely the extant version, now in the collection of the Lutheran Church in America, and signed "WB inv [in monogram] 1805."

Lot 172. The Seven Golden Candlesticks

C. 1800-05? Purchased by Butts Jr. for 5s. and sold at his June 1853 auction, lot 109, to Bohn for £1 11s. as *The Seven Candlesticks*. This untraced work was not seen by Rossetti, who lists it by the June 1852 and not Butts title (229, #171), as does Butlin (514).

Lot 173. Adam and Eve in Paradise

C. 1800-06? Purchased by Butts Jr. for 19s. No work with this title is recorded by Rossetti or other sales. Butlin records an untraced "drawing in colours" with this title, which passed from Flaxman to his sister-in-law, Maria Denham, before being sold at Christie's 26 April 1876 (Butlin 835). More likely it was a version of *Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve*. One such version was dated 1806 and listed in Butts's June 1853 catalogue (lot 100) as *Adam, Eve and Serpent* (Butlin 531; Rossetti 209, #71). Arguing against this supposition is the fact that the June 1852 material was grouped together in the June 1853 auction as lots 103-115 (116?) and *Adam, Eve and Serpent* was lot 100.

Lot 174. "But hope rekindled only to illumine"

C. 1805. Purchased by Evans for £1 1s., presumably the bookdealer, either R. H. or W., and acquired by Mrs. Anne Gilchrist by 1863 (Rossetti 235, #210). The work is one of the illustrations to Blair's *The Grave*, otherwise known as *The Descent of Man into the Vale of Death: "But Hope Rekindled, Only to Illumine the Shades of Death, and Light Her to the Tomb"* (Butlin 238). Gilchrist claims that it was "formerly in Mr. Butts's collections" and is "a duplicate, probably, of one of the unengraved designs from Young" (1: 223). The claim, as Butlin notes, is apparently based on the similarity in style to the watercolors painted for Butts c. 1800-05. Butlin also notes that "though related in subject and composition to plate 7 of *The Grave* it seems to be an independent, perhaps slightly earlier, design" (638).

Lot 175. St Paul shaking off the Viper

C. 1803-05. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 5s. There are two similar versions of this painting (Butlin 509, 510), both assumed to have been executed for Butts. Nearly all the works Butts acquired from the June 1852 auction were put up for sale the following year, lots 103-15 (116?). Given this pattern, the version bought at the June 1852 auction is probably the one sold at Foster's 29 June 1853, lot 107, for 12s. to Bohn as *St Paul and the Viper* (Butlin 510) and the second version the one sold by Captain Butts's widow in 1906 (Butlin 509).

Lot 176. *The Assumption—an elaborate and exquisitely finished work in the finest manner of this extraordinary artist and genius*

Dated 1806. Purchased by Fuller for £4 2s., the largest price paid for any of the Blake works at the June 1852 auction. Rossetti records the June 1852 title and paraphrases the description as "Described in the Sale-catalogue as an elaborate and exquisitely finished work in Blake's finest manner" (231, #195). Butlin refers to the work as *The Assumption of the Virgin* (513).

Lots 177-82 are preceded by the subheading:

⁷² George Richmond painted a tempera in 1826 with this title, now in the Tate Gallery (see Paley 115-16 and color plate XII). The painting elicited this question from Robert Essick: "Might there be some compositional relationship between Blake's design, untraced since 1853, and Richmond's? There is no record of Richmond having access to Butts's collection, where Blake's drawing would have been by the time Richmond met Blake" ("Marketplace 1986" 13). Richmond also executed a drawing in graphite and colored chalk entitled *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden*, which raises similar questions regarding lot 173 of the June 1852 sale, *Adam and Eve in Paradise*.

The six following Designs, by Blake, are illustrative of Milton's "Paradise Lost."

Lot 177. "So judged he man"

Dated 1808. Purchased by Fuller for £1 7s. Butlin records it as *The Judgment of Adam and Eve: 'So Judged He Man'* (536.10). Rossetti placed this work and the two others purchased by Fuller (lots 180, 182) outside the *Paradise Lost* group, recording them in *Poetic and Miscellaneous* works (255, #16-18) in the order and with the titles of the June 1852 sale catalogue, though identifying only the first and third as illustrations of *Paradise Lost*, which, coincidentally, are two of the three designs that Linnell had traced in 1822.

Lot 178. "Father! thy word is past"

Dated 1808. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 17s. and resold in his June 1853 auction, lot 139 ("Nine from Milton"), to Strange for £17 6s.6d. Rossetti quotes the whole line as its title: "Father, Thy word is passed, Man shall find grace" (210, #75c); Butlin refers to it as *Christ Offers to Redeem Man* (536.3).

Lot 179. "Ah! gentle pair"

Dated 1808. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 10s, resold in 1853 in June 1853 auction, lot 139. Rossetti and Butlin record it as *Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve* (Rossetti 210, #75d; Butlin 536.4).

Lot 180. "Awake! arise! or be for ever fallen"

Dated 1808. Purchased by Fuller for £1 11s. Butlin records it as *Satan Arousing the Rebel Angels* (536.1). See lot 177.

Lot 181. "But to the cross he nails the enemies"

Dated 1808. Purchased by Butts Jr. for 10s. and sold in his June 1853 auction, lot 139. Quote is from *Paradise Lost* 12.415. Butlin records it as *Michael Foretells the Crucifixion* (536.11). Rossetti records it as *Michael Foretells the Crucifixion to Adam* and quotes lines 12.415-17.

Lot 182. "Oh, Father! what extends thy hand, she cry'd, against thy only Son"

C. 1808. Purchased by Fuller for £1 11s. Butlin records it as *Satan, Sin and Death: Satan Comes to the Gates of Hell* (536.2). Rossetti records it by the June 1852 title, followed by "(Satan, Sin, and Death, from 'Paradise Lost'). [Mr. Fuller, from Mr. Butts.]" (255, #18).

Lot 182x.

This lot number was written in pen, but no title is given. The work was purchased by Butts Jr. for 11s. It seems certainly to have been a Blake design. Was it a *Paradise Lost* illustration, or another biblical watercolor? Given that all the material except Milton designs from the June 1852 sale remained together as a group in the June 1853 sale (lots 103-15), it seems reasonable to assume that either lot 102 or 116 of the 1853 sale may have been lot 182x. Lot 102 in 1853 was *The Sacrifice of Isaac* and seven Shakespeare drawings; the first is biblical in subject, but, like the Shakespeare drawings, is much earlier in technique and at 19 x 24.5 cm, quite smaller in size than the biblical watercolors, all about 40 x 35 cm. Lot 116 was *The Ten Commandments*, which is the same size, medium, and date as the other watercolors in the June 1852 auction.

Appendix 2

The following is an annotated list of the Blake works sold at Sotheby's on 5 July 1852 as part of the E. V. Utterson collection.

Lot 248. Blake (William) Twelve Illustrations of "Blair's Grave," engraved by Schiavonetti, portrait 1808.

Purchased by Butts Jr. for 18s. and sold at his 29 June 1853 auction, lot 143, for £2 2s. to Wood.

Lot 249. Blake (W.) *Young's Night Thoughts*, designed and etched by himself, original impressions imp. 4to, 1797.

Purchased by James Toovey for £1 5s.

Lot 250. Blake, *Another Copy*, fine impressions[;] half green morocco, gilt top ib. 1797.

Purchased by James Toovey for £1 9s. This and the copy in lot 249 were probably uncolored; neither fit the descriptions of the known colored copies (see Bentley, *Blake Books* 642-47). Butts may have passed because he already had a copy, which he sold with a copy of *The Grave* (presumably Utterson's copy) at his 29 June 1853 sale. Captain Butts sold "twenty pages of proofs in various states" in his 1903 auction (lot 21); these are probably the *Night Thoughts* designs Mary Butts refers to as being in her father's collection in the late nineteenth century (Butts 164).

Lot 251. Blake (W.) *America, a Prophecy*, with Eighteen Singular Designs, printed in tints by the artist himself, rare ib. 1793.

Purchased by Holmes for £2 7s. Possibly John Holmes the antiquary and senior keeper of the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum (1800-54), or James Holmes (1777-1860), a watercolorist and miniaturist. Linnell records in his journal for 20 August 1819: "with Mr Holmes to Mr Blake, Evg" (Bentley, *Blake Records Supplement* 104). The British Museum purchased *America* copy H in 1856 and copy F in 1859 (Bentley, *Blake Books* 103, 102). Both copies were printed in black ink and unwashed, and thus neither seems likely to have been Utterson's copy—which suggests that the Holmes who purchased the works may have been the painter and not the curator. "Singular" does not really identify format, since it could mean rare as well as separate (i.e., designs on single leaves). In this case it appears to mean the former, which suggests the possibility of a recto/verso copy. That the designs were "printed in tints" as opposed to colored suggests copy R, printed on both sides of the leaf in bluish and greenish black ink as well as blue and green (Essick, "Resurrection" 139).

Lot 252. Blake (W.) *The Book of Ahania*, with Three Illustrations, etched and coloured by himself, rare, and One other Etching by him Lambeth, 1795

Purchased by Richard Monckton Milnes (the future Lord Houghton) for £1 13s. Bentley does not list an owner of copy A before Milnes and assumes that the copy Lowndes records as being sold in the "1855" auction (1: 216) was copy Bb and not copy A, as Keynes states (*Blake Books* 114 n1; *Census* 95). But Lowndes was referring to Utterson's copy, as is evinced by his recording the correct price. Copy A was sold with "three illustrations" (plates 1, 2, 6), which indicates that it was complete when acquired by Milnes. When sold by Milnes's son, the Earl of Crewe, at Sotheby's on 30 March 1903, it consisted only of "5 engraved plates, with a coloured vignette on the first and last pages" e.g. plates 2 and 6 (lot 7). Its initial frontispiece

(plate 1), now known as copy Ba, was sold separately in the same auction as "An Allegorical Subject of a Giant with a nude female figure, in colours," along with a few set loose impressions (lot 18). As Bentley notes, the date the original frontispiece was extracted and whether it was known to Gilchrist and Swinburne are unclear (*Blake Books* 114n1). The complete six-plate work, however, was reproduced by Yeats and Ellis in 1893.⁷³

Lot 253. Blake (W.) Illustrations of Milton's "Comus." *The Eight Original Designs*, drawn and coloured by himself, in his peculiar and unique style.

C. 1816. Purchased by Butts Jr. for £4 6s. and sold at his June 1853 auction, lot 98, for £6 6s. to Strange. *The Eight Original Designs* may imply that the designs are original drawings, as opposed to prints or copies, but it may also reflect Utterson's awareness of the Thomas set and perhaps his opinion about which set was executed first. Butts sold *Comus* with "the artist's descriptions" (lot 98), which are not mentioned in the Utterson catalogue (and are untraced), but were presumably included in the series as owned by Utterson and may have been why Utterson considered his set first and the model for the other.

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⁷³ The frontispiece now in copy A is from another, presumably lost, copy. It may have been the impression sold anonymously on 11 May 1895 at Sotheby's to R. Ward (Bentley, *Blake Books* 114). The "one other etching" that accompanied *Ahania* in the Utterson sale may have been one of the prints that sold with the *Ahania* frontispiece in lot 18 of the Crewe sale at Sotheby's on 30 March 1903. These loose impressions consisted of an "Ancient of Days" proof, "A plate from *Europe* in drab," *For the Sexes* plate 3, *There is No Natural Religion* title plate, and the frontispiece to Burger's *Leonora*. The last item was designed but not etched by Blake; the second *Europe* plate has not been identified, but "in drab" suggests that it was printed in olive or brown.

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R E V I E W

Harvey Birenbaum. *Between Blake and Nietzsche: The Reality of Culture*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press and London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992. Pp. xvi + 159; \$26.50.

Reviewed by STEPHEN CLARK

Harvey Birenbaum's study of Blake and Nietzsche has both the strengths and weaknesses of its comparative format. It combines a broad characterization of intellectual affiliation with illuminating tessellations of detail, and has the considerable merit of attempting to situate Blake within the context of European romanticism. This is achieved, however, at the expense of an habitual recourse to composite generalization. The focus ceases to be making sense of the work of the individual author: problems of internal coherence and evolution are downgraded, if not altogether bypassed, to allow points of similarity and contact to be emphasized. But as the two thinkers have been yoked together since Yeats and Symons, it is welcome to have an extended treatment of their relation.

Birenbaum, however, has bigger fish to fry. After the reflex linguistic pyrrhonism of the past decades, the time may well be ripe for a contemporary reformulation of the neo-Kantian doctrine of symbolic forms associated with Cassirer and Langer, whose closest analogue in the field of Blake studies remains Northrup Frye. Birenbaum's ambition to rehabilitate this body of work deserves respect, and later in this review I wish to take up some of its premises in detail. First, however, some more general indication of the ground covered by Birenbaum may be helpful.

Both Blake and Nietzsche are characterized in terms of their "critique of all culture" (4), and on numerous occasions we are assured of their "almost identical pairs of psychological targets" (15). This lack of differentiation is indicative of a larger tendency to abstract from any specifiable cultural context. One might have expected, for example, some discussion of common intellectual genealogies, such as the critique of causality via Hume, the degree of adjustment before and after Darwin, and the extent of the continued dependence on a sentimentalist idea of innate impulse in both writers. When Bakhtin is invoked in the third chapter, there is no consideration of issues of power in the carnivalesque, of whether licensed transgression subverts or reconfirms hierarchies, and no attempt to identify the immanent speech-communities out of which the dialogic text is constructed. Such historical perspective as we encounter comes in terms of "European civilization precariously bal-

anced between predicament and opportunity" (40), or "cultural history" as a movement towards comprehension of the archetype (xvi).

Second, both writers are presented in terms of an "energetic explosion of the irrational" (4). This claim is partially rescinded in the case of Nietzsche, who, it is immediately acknowledged, "challenges customary reasoning out of logical necessity" (4) but continues to result in a highly reductive characterization of Blake's work. The presence of rationalist elements in his thoughts remains much more complex than this suggests: in terms of continuous intellectual preoccupation, Blake may even be said to have been of Urizen's party without knowing it. Such obvious examples come to mind as the heroic dimension of Urizen's struggle to create a world out of chaos, and the "sweet Science" that "reigns" after the "Spectre of Prophecy" has "Departed" (*FZ* 139.5-10 [IX 850-55], E 407), and the allocation of a ring-side seat at the resurrection to "Bacon & Newton & Locke" (*J* 98:9). Furthermore, it is patently inadequate to assume that his work may somehow be exempted from "conventional rational interpretation" (7). As Blake himself reminds us, it is "a most pernicious Falshood" of Plato's that "Poets & Prophets do not know or Understand what they write or Utter" for "If they do not pray is an inferior Kind to be calld Knowing" (*VLJ* E 554).

Birenbaum moves without apparent qualm from Blake as a proponent of the irrational to a somewhat hackneyed version of the neglected visionary who was "virtually on his own" (53). From here it is a short step to insisting that he is a "shaman or a tribal artist" who must "be taken at his word" in his testimony of a spirit world (49-50). No original evidence is used to support this claim, and it is simple enough to refute. If we regard Blake in terms of his career as an engraver, a "professional among professionals," as Birenbaum himself puts it (50), he remains in continuous and productive interchange with a contemporary audience throughout his career. To discuss his work in terms of liminal states introduces an unnecessary element of melodrama and distracts attention away from the more interesting issue of the parodic, or at least dramatically contextualized use of the histrionic, in the prophesies.

The status of the psychological *per se* remains obscure. Both Blake and Nietzsche, we are told, possess an "absolute sense of themselves as persons" (4), but the obvious query as to how can we "read a text for the person in it" (6) when we construct that self from our encounter with that text is never adequately addressed. Such invocations would carry considerably more weight if some detailed consideration was given to the notion of personal identity implied by the "fortuitous concourse of memories accumulated & lost" (*J* 29:8). Instead we are offered a broadly therapeutic and wholly anachronistic ideal of self-expression.

"Culture," it is declared, "is a problem of personal psychology" (15). At the very least, several interim stages of ar-

gument need to be inserted in order to justify such a transposition. Bakhtin is invoked to perform this unification of private and public spheres, but as the title of the third chapter, "The solitary carnival," suggests, the effect is to internalize the cultural rather than socialize the psychic.

To "reinvent discourse" (6), Birenbaum argues, would transform both the self and the symbolic forms which it inhabits. This implies the recovery of an occluded mythopoeic dimension that simultaneously transcends and refutes "the leveling, abstracting, and objectifying force of conventional language" (6). Leaving aside the contentious nature of this characterization (does it include metaphor, for example?), it will be helpful to begin by considering its relevance to Nietzsche.

The more obviously mythic elements of the German philosopher's thought—the superman, eternal recurrence, the Apollonian and the Dionysiac—are precisely what the contemporary reader tends to find least satisfactory: Birenbaum himself finds them "sometimes forced and excessively conscious" (87). The problem is not that we have too few myths, but that we have too many, each claiming a self-authenticating priority. "As myths, they simply do not make logical contact" (82); consequently, there can be no rational grounds for preferring positions with which we might sympathize, say, the assault on slave morality to the arrogant elitism of a "myth of the nobler nobleman" (85). Birenbaum is left in the uncomfortable position of refusing to commit himself to the biologicistic affirmation of the Will to Power, with all its respective historical contamination, while still resisting a reading in terms of semiotic demystification in favor of a putative mythic plentitude.

The problem lies primarily in Birenbaum's insistence on the successive rather than contemporaneous nature of the conflict of interpretations. Blake and Nietzsche must not "simply undo the language and the culture given to them," but must instead "bring both closer to the logic of directly perceived relationships and the nature of immediate experience alive with feeling" (6-7). One does not have to be a card-carrying deconstructor to accept that the mediation of language itself precludes access to any such realm. Here, and throughout the book, the moment of affirmation is defined so nebulously as to be virtually meaningless. Birenbaum's analysis, by situating itself on the plane of the ontological, proves incapable of envisaging a hermeneutic level on which doubt may be seen as not merely the prelude to but synonymous with energetic creation.

The manifest shortcomings of his argument at this point do, however, have the virtue of drawing attention to a key issue: how may we conceptualize interpretation as a moment of denial and resistance without reverting to a philosophical concept of negativity or a glib and impoverished proclamation of the ludic?

With Blake, comparable problems arise. Although the early polemics on behalf of energy and delight tend to be more

favorably received than Nietzsche's adoration of power, the same interchange of dogmatism and self-reformulation is apparent. When Los proclaims, "I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Mans" (*J* 10:20), should the emphasis fall on the "System" or on the desire to "Create"? Birenbaum is by no means exceptional in claiming for Blake's writing the freedom of open-ended process while basing his exposition on locally doctrinaire pronouncements. There is virtually no attention to the narrative and dramatic structures of the later prophesies, nor consideration of their textual complexities. "Specialists" are somewhat disparagingly opposed to "new readers" (41), but Birenbaum's readings of the lyrics are deeply flawed by their apparent unconcern with the basic debates concerning viewpoint and persona: the narrator of "London," for example, is confidently classified as the "same voice of Blake"; the speaker of "The Fly" as affirming his "essential innocence" (63). One may feel broadly sympathetic to the aim of reading the *Songs* "without the defense of irony" (73) without preemptively dismissing all attempts to understand them "ironically or sociologically" as merely a "cyclical trap" (70); at the very least, some consideration of the generic inversion of hymn and children's song is required, and also their relation to Swedenborg's theory of correspondences. Furthermore there is little or no analysis of the specifically epistemological claims made by Blake. It may be more persuasive to regard the realm of imagination as founded upon a theory of constitutive metaphor than upon a quasi-Berkeleyan idealism, but the vocabulary in which it is articulated suggests the latter.

It would be clearer and more honest if Birenbaum were prepared to distinguish between levels of reality and to declare an investment in an ulterior, opaque dimension. Instead, he claims to be offering a secular account of cultural symbolism when his arguments at their most plausible pull in precisely the opposite direction. The move to the ontological without adequate prior consideration of the semantic all too easily becomes a mode of dogmatism: all that restrains Birenbaum is a humanist vocabulary of culture which is clearly at variance with the assertions designed to support it.

Two questions cannot be avoided if one is to resuscitate a vocabulary of symbolic forms: what is the relation of the mythic to the related but distinct phenomena of metaphor and symbol? and secondly, how are we to arbitrate between competing or contradictory manifestations? Birenbaum's terminology shifts confusingly on the first issue: sometimes the symbol appears to be verbal; at others it is opposed to the merely figural. It "provides a focus to comprehend the unity of author, audience, thought, and the world—in the work of imagination, where they all meet naturally" (xii), a process supported by analogy with the "process of projection" (xiv), an oddly Lockean conjunction of screen and darkened room. Even if one accepts that there is an initial state of "fragmentation" to be overcome, it remains to be

seen whether "integration" is likely to be forthcoming in the texts of Blake and Nietzsche.

The symbol "holds various impulses in tension, and involves itself in conflict with other points of view" (xiv), a capacity designated "quasiousness" (xii). Although myth has previously been defined "as an instrument to know what is valid" (xi), it now transpires that it is "powerfully meaningful because it is also going to be wrong" (xiii). The term "collusion," in the sense of playing with, is used to define this relation (xiii): "we grant them their own charm and eagerly fall under their spell." Thus the authority of the symbol derives from an active forgetting of its origin, exactly the process which the myth of Albion and Vala dramatizes and one would have thought exposed.

Birenbaum is clearly vulnerable to the familiar charge laid against the phenomenology of religion: that its descriptive (and arguably implicitly prescriptive) method is devoid of the element of conflict contained within a properly hermeneutic stance. It can serve as no more than a confirmatory mode, willing to divulge its enigmas only to those who have already decided what they can find. There is no element of risk or uncertainty in "this way of knowing that requires appreciation, if not awe" (xvi).

Birenbaum's specific arguments against deconstructive approaches are unimpressive: it seems peculiar to treat Derrida's "Spurs" rather than "White Mythology" on the issue of philosophical metaphor (108-11); and to dismiss de Man's reading of Nietzsche for treating signs as "binary substitutions" rather than "unifying participations" ignores his assiduous demonstrations of the dependence of the one on the other (107-08). Above all, Birenbaum underestimates the sheer productivity of a semiotic model, even though his own infrequent close analyses of Blake's language are clearly indebted to it (e.g., 54-59). But in terms of its basic hermeneutic stance, it may be seen as continuous with rather than antithetical to the ubiquitous skepticism of recent methodologies. Their frequently exemplary rigor and finesse have been customarily expanded on behalf of Blake, whose decentered universe and habitual indeterminacy of text provide convenient corroboration of their supposedly subversive analyses.

Birenbaum provides a helpful introductory commentary on the relation of Blake and Nietzsche, but if we take his larger ambitions seriously, his book may be seen as mirroring what it claims to displace. It cannot disbelieve enough, but attains a representative significance in this failure. The contrast with *Fearful Symmetry* may be illuminating. Whereas Birenbaum makes no attempt to circumscribe the domain of myth, Frye insists upon both an internal dynamism within its concentric levels and perhaps, more importantly, a judicious sense of what it could not incorporate. The euphoria of Frye's exposition is at all times tempered by a residual astringency, and it is perhaps this quality from which Blake studies in the 1990s can learn most.

Romanticism on the Net

The announcement of a new Web page and electronic journal:

Hello and welcome to Romanticism On the Net. The first issue of this new electronic journal will be launched in a couple of months. In the meantime, here is an outline of the purpose of this new international journal entirely devoted to Romantic Studies. Why a new electronic journal? With the expansion of electronic media and the increasing success of the Internet, I think it is time for an electronic journal entirely devoted to Romantic Studies to be created. There are already a few journals developed by departments of English across the world but none so far dedicated to the Romantic Period only. The Internet is a source of information for academic purpose as the latest edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (4th edition, 1995) shows since it explains how to cite material from electronic journals. What purpose? My purpose is similar to that of a "conventional" journal in offering articles and reviews but the limitless amount of space in the Internet allows me to advertise other journals or conferences, as well as graduate courses, or offer some links to other Romantic-related sites on the World Wide Web, such as the on-line database of Romantic Poetry. One does not have the limitations imposed by publishers when working with the Internet. Any questions? For any enquiries or suggestions, send me an e-mail:

michael.laplace-sinatra@stcatz.ox.ac.uk
Michael Laplace-Sinatra, Editor of Romanticism On the Net

The editor reports that the first issue will be out in January. Submissions can be sent to Michael Laplace-Sinatra, St. Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ or to Michael Gamer, Department of English, 119 Bennett Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA 19104-6273.

The page also has information about and links to conferences, journals (including Blake), sites related to romanticism, and associations. The URL is <http://info.ox.ac.uk:80/~scat0385/>.

A new Web page for *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* is under construction. It will probably contain subscription information, a current table of contents, and late-breaking news items, as well as links to other Blake-related sites. Stay tuned for further developments.

To Bring Them to Perfection Has Caused This Delay (E 745)

The summer issue of *Blake* has been much delayed. We've changed printers and Patricia Neill had to learn an entirely new way of getting the files to the printer. The new printer and procedures should produce faster turnaround and higher quality. Thank you for your patience. The summer, fall and winter issues will all be out shortly.

Jean H. Hagstrum
1913 - 1995