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WILLIAM BLAKE'S PRINTED PAINTINGS

Methods · Origins · Meanings

Appendices One and Two

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Appendices

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Blake Redefines Fresco

“Blake applied the term fresco to his own pictures in a somewhat unusual sense. According to the literal meaning of the word, he cannot be said to have ever painted a fresco in his life.”

(Dante Rossetti, *Life* I 368)

In May 1809, Blake issued an advertisement for an exhibition and another advertisement for the exhibition’s catalogue. In the former, he confidently asserted that

Fresco Painting is properly Miniature, or Enamel Painting; every thing in Fresco is as high finished as Miniature or Enamel, although in Works larger than Life. The Art has been lost: I have recovered it. How this was done, will be told, together with the whole Process, in a Work on Art, now in the Press.

(E 527)

The claim that the art of fresco had been “lost” is surprising. True fresco, or *buon fresco*, was explained in numerous painting treatises, which also provided instructions for making other kinds of water-based paints, such as “body color” (gouache) and “distemper,” in addition to oil colors and enamels.¹ But to Blake, “Fresco Painting, as it is now practised, is like most other things, the contrary of what it pretends to be” (E 527). Perhaps he is alluding to the four frescos that J. F. Rigaud (1742–1810) painted in 1794 in the cupola of Guildhall, or to Rigaud’s fresco of the *Accension* in St. Martin’s Outwich church, all of which were badly deteriorated by 1809.² Blake both claims to have *recovered* the lost art of fresco and to have, in effect, *reinvented* it as a new kind of painting, which he called “portable fresco.” Blake’s reference to a forthcoming “Work on Art” that would explain the “whole Process” is equally surprising, since no such treatise is extant. This “Work” appears to be the “account of my various Inventions in Art,” for which, he tells Cumberland on 19 December 1808, he had “procured a Publisher” (E 770). While not explaining the processes of fresco or other inventions, the advertisements and catalogue express Blake’s theories of art in general, ideas of fresco in particular, and an acute sense of himself as a painter. They also help to date when Blake reconceived monoprints as frescos and why.

In both advertisements, Blake forcefully asserts his originality as an inventor of designs and media. The advertisement of the “Exhibition of *Paintings in Fresco*, Poetical and Historical Inventions, BY. Wm. Blake,” singles out four of the exhibition’s nine

frescos, including “THE ANCIENT BRITONS . . . the Figures full as large as Life” (E 526) and “Two Pictures, representing grand Apotheoses of NELSON and PITT” (E 527). The advertisement of “A Descriptive Catalogue” notes that in the “Exhibition will be seen real Art, as it was left us by *Raphael* and *Albert Durer*, *Michael Angelo*, and *Julio Romano*; stripped from the Ignorances of *Rubens* and *Rembrandt*, of *Titian* and *Correggio*; BY WILLIAM BLAKE.” It describes the catalogue as “containing Mr. B.’s Opinions and Determinations on Art,” all “very necessary to be known by Artists and Connoisseurs of all Ranks,” and that “These Original Conceptions on Art” are “by an Original Artist” (E 528). Blake articulates concisely the premise, motivation, and patriotic objectives behind his immodest assertions: “if Art is the glory of a Nation, if Genius and Inspiration are the great Origin and Bond of Society, the distinction my Works have obtained from those who best understand such things, calls for my Exhibition as the greatest of Duties to my Country” (E 528).

Blake believed fresco’s absence in England was not due to an absence of talent or adverse climate—Boydell’s promotion of Rigaud’s Guildhall frescos in 1794 and Pyne’s defense of them in 1808 made similar claims—but to England “being the Seat and Protectress of bad (that is blotting and blurring) Art” (E 528). For Blake, “bad Art” was anything from the Venetian and Flemish schools of art and contrasted art from the Roman and Florentine schools. In the former schools, colors, brushwork, and *chiaroscuro* define forms and line plays a subordinate role; in the latter schools, colors are strong and flat, but subordinate to line. Blake is characteristically blunt on the matter: “The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism, and bungling.” Hence, “Till we get rid of Titian and Correggio, Rubens and Rembrandt, We never shall equal Rafael and Albert Durer, Michael Angelo, and Julio Romano” (E 550, 530).

Whatever the correctness of his polemic, Blake was mistaken in identifying “all the little old Pictures, called cabinet Pictures,” as “Fresco.” He was mistaken in defining “Fresco” as “properly Miniature, or Enamel Painting,” and incorrect in conflating the two. Miniatures can share with frescos a water-miscible paint, but enamel paintings, which involve a baking process, cannot. Blake defines the “Invention of a portable Fresco” in terms of its primary materials. He states: “A Wall on Canvas or Wood, or

any other portable thing, of dimensions ever so large, or ever so small, which may be removed with the same convenience as so many easel Pictures; is worthy the consideration of the Rich and those who have the direction of public Works" (E 527). Blake says "on," not "of." Blake's "wall" on canvas, wood, panel, or paper was literally layers of gesso, which he used in place of lime plaster. Supports so prepared were transformed into "walls," which could be small or large, moved or removed.

Blake was mistaken to equate lime plaster with gesso. "Let it be observed," he states, "that before Vandyke's time, and in his time all the genuine Pictures are on Plaster or Whiting grounds and none since" (E 530). Dante Rossetti was correct about Blake never having "painted a fresco in his life" (*Life* I 368). He did not paint with alkaline resistant pigments ground in water or apply them to layers of fresh plaster, as in *buon fresco*, where colors have no vehicle or binder other than water. Because colors are not tempered with glue, gum, oil, or egg, they become part of the plaster and wall. The artist applies a smooth layer of plaster to the area to be painted that day (the *giornata*), which allowed about eight to nine hours of painting within twelve hours of drying time.

The great advantage of painting into fresh plaster is its durability; the disadvantage is that the artist must work relatively quickly and without mistakes. There is no improvisation. Instead, "let your Design be perfect at first, for in this there is no after Alteration to be made" (Lens 15). Blake, by his own admission, worked "at intervals." He worked over and over-worked many of his experimental paintings, chasing, like a painter in oils, the "demon" *chiaroscuro* only to lose his initially distinct forms until he wrestled them back out of a dark background.³ He describes *Satan calling up his Legions* as a struggle, the result of trial, error, and intermittent vision:

THIS Picture was likewise painted at intervals, for experiment on colours, without any oily vehicle; it may be worthy of attention, not only on account of its composition, but of the great labour which has been bestowed on it, that is, three or four times as much as would have finished a more perfect Picture; the labor has destroyed the lineaments, it was with difficulty brought back again to a certain effect, which it had at first, when all the lineaments were perfect.

These Pictures, among numerous others painted for experiment, were the result of temptations and perturbations, labouring to destroy Imaginative power, by means of that infernal machine, called Chiaro Oscuro, in the hands of Venetian and Flemish Demons; whose enmity

*to the Painter himself, and to all Artists who study in the Florentine and Roman Schools, may be removed by an exhibition and exposure of their vile tricks.*⁴

(E 547)

This is not painting in fresco. The process and result are not fresco. The paint buildup and rough surfaces of "these pictures" do not resemble the flat surfaces and bright colors of *buon fresco*. In fresco, as in watercolors, white is supplied by the support, by white plaster in place of white paper; it is not a positive or opaque color. The use of a white paint is characteristic of distemper and oil painting and Blake's use of a white (usually made of chalk) in his "frescos" is evidence enough that he was not painting in true fresco. Blake's practice could be construed, though, as analogous to *secco fresco*. This technique is not mentioned in Dossie or other English art manuals, but presumably Blake knew of it. In *secco fresco*, colors are mixed with chalks and a binder of egg, casein, or size and applied to dry (*secco*) plaster that has been moistened with an emulsion to simulate fresh plaster. The plaster is left rough to facilitate adhesion of the colors; the image is less durable and is susceptible to flaking off over time, but it can be worked up and retouched at an unrushed pace. In practice, a *secco* work was done on top of *buon fresco*, to add repairs, details, and colors (e. g., blues) that do not work well in the alkaline environment of lime plaster. Because the plaster surface is rough and the colors have covering power, works painted *a secco* can appear thicker than they might be, much like washes do on striated or rough gesso grounds.

Rather than having recovered the lost art of fresco painting, Blake had discovered an analogy between his painting practice at the time and *secco fresco*. The analogy enabled him to expand fresco's definition and possibilities for his age. Most important, it set up a syllogism that conferred the authority of the ancients on his practice. The syllogism was simple and elegant: true and original artists paint in fresco; I paint in fresco. I am a true and original artist. His analogy and comments about outline and form, however, do not describe his practice of monoprinting in 1795, when he performed primarily as a colorist and reimposed outlines over painterly colors.

As a painter, Blake's primary innovations were to paint large without oils and in water-based colors on gesso supports instead of sized paper. The gesso surface was harder than paper, making it especially suitable for a "more distinct, sharp, and wirey . . . bounding line" (E 550). Its hard surface is why Blake likens fresco

to ivory and states that “Fresco Painting is susceptible of higher finishing than Drawing on Paper, or than any other method of Painting” (E 549). To Reynolds’ comment that fresco was “a mode of painting which excludes attention to minute elegancies,” Blake responds with “This is False,” “Fresco Painting is the Most Minute,” and “Fresco Painting is Like Miniature Painting; a Wall is a Large Ivory” (E 653). In the life-size *Ancient Britons* and, apparently, lost version of *The Last Judgment* (Butlin 648), Blake took the wall metaphor literally. In the latter painting, which was in progress when Blake died, Blake continued to work with the mind and hand of miniaturist, something J. T. Smith implies, claiming that had Blake “fortunately lived till the next year’s exhibition at Somerset-house, the public would then have been astonished at his exquisite finishing of [this] Fresco picture . . . containing upwards of one thousand figures, many of them wonderfully conceived and grandly drawn” (BR2 617).

Blake’s “portable fresco” was a “wall” of gessoed canvas or panel painted on in watercolors. Blake was not alone in pushing the boundaries of watercolors, trying to elevate the medium’s status and make it competitive with oil painting. Paul Sandby, Edward Dayes, Turner, Thomas Girtin, John Cotman, David Cox, and other artists began experimenting with opaque watercolors and oil painting techniques like glazing and *chiaroscuro* to define and model forms.⁵ They altered the look and feel of their colors and increased the scale of their supports by using large, conjoined, and panoramic sheets of paper. But they continued to apply their colors to sized paper, not gessoed supports. Blake wants watercolor drawings to be paintings and paintings to retain the essence of drawing, the bounding line. He claims that “the chief objects in painting” his pictures have been “CLEARNESS and precision . . . Clear colours unmuddled by oil, and firm and determinate lineaments unbroken by shadows, which ought to display and not to hide form, as is the practice of the latter Schools of Italy and Flanders” (E 530). He promoted “portable fresco” as answering these objectives while avoiding the alleged defects of oil paintings. His “frescos” competed with oil paintings in size and body—and surpassed them altogether in linearity.

Blake believed that oil (linseed or nut) “deadens every colour it is mixed with, at its first mixture, and in a little time becomes a yellow mask over all that it touches” (E 530). “Let it be observed,” he states, “that before Vandyke’s time, and in his time all the genuine Pictures are on Plaster or Whiting grounds

and none since” (E 530).⁶ As noted, lime plaster is not the same as gesso, and Blake’s preference for whiting grounds on canvas was widely shared. Painting on gesso grounds with *watercolors*, though, was his innovation alone. It solved a technical problem watercolorists had about scaling up their works. Using panel or canvas, Blake could paint large in watercolors and still maintain the minute details of drawings.

Blake champions fresco to defend his integrity as an artist. Despite his pugnacious tone, he was not starting a fight. He was contributing to an ongoing debate between line and color, which for Blake, as well as Reynolds and other neo-classically trained artists, was exemplified by the contrast between the Florentine and Roman schools of art and the Venetians and Flemish. In the most general terms, this was the debate between Neoclassicism and Romanticism, and Blake, who believed in the dominance of line but also in first thoughts, was a transitional figure, a neo-classically trained romantic artist.⁷ As a line engraver, printer of paintings, and a painter of temperas and “frescos,” he approached the debate with hands and eyes in both worlds.

Such marginality and mixing of genres, essential parts of Blake’s genius, failed to impress the Royal Academy, which excluded watercolors from its exhibitions after 1800. Blake took this personally, arguing that his designs, “being all in Water-colours, (that is in Fresco) are regularly **refused** to be exhibited by the *Royal Academy*, and the *British Institution* has, this year, followed its example, and has effectually **excluded** me by this Resolution; . . . it is therefore become necessary that I should exhibit to the Public, in an Exhibition of my own, my Designs, Painted in Watercolours” (E 527–28, emphasis added).⁸

Blake did not set out to recover long lost secrets. His invention of “portable fresco” evolved over a decade or more of making his own water-miscible colors that had body, opacity, and texture and could compete with oil paints. He used them in color printing, monoprinting, and biblical temperas, which became “frescos.” His new paintings were experiments in painting before they were “frescos”—or even experiments in fresco. His hand-made colors enabled him to *paint* forms, as opposed to laying in washes over outlines or touching in colors; the use of chalk for whites, instead of the paper, enabled him to create direct and positive highlights. By giving watercolors the body characteristic of oil painting and combining them with the bold outline characteristic of watercolor drawings, Blake did indeed invent yet another hybrid art form, one analogous to the mono-

prints of 1795.

Blake appears to have made the connection between his two inventions around 1809, signing five monoprints around that time “Fresco W Blake inv” (“Signing” 389-91). The connection appears to have been based on the similar look, feel, and texture of their paint surfaces and wiry outlines. In both techniques, Blake painted on gessoed supports: millboard for monoprints and canvas or panel for frescos. The initial painting on the gessoed millboard in water-miscible colors was the “fresco”; the impression pulled from this matrix was the fresco’s counter-proof—a fresco once removed. Had Blake made the connection before 1809, then, presumably, he would have included one or more monoprints in the exhibition. None of the extant works exhibited in 1809 is inscribed “fresco,” which suggests that the monoprints may have been the first works explicitly identified by Blake as “fresco.”

Monoprints after Blake’s Death, 1827-1863

“Last night I saw Capt. Butts’s collection of Blakes. He has four or five large coloured ones, the same size as your Elijah, which are of the same value, and constitute with it the finest class of Blake’s larger sized works I know: they are truly glorious.”

(Dante Rossetti to Anne Gilchrist, c. 1862, *Anne Gilchrist* 134)

William Blake’s large color drawings are monoprints and masterworks in the visual arts. From twelve matrices, all executed in 1795, Blake produced at least thirty-three impressions in three different printings. In 1795, he printed “first” and “second pulls” from each design without replenishing the colors between impressions, and “third pulls” from three designs, for a total of twenty-seven impressions. Blake reprinted *Elijah/God Judging Adam, Hecate*, and *House of Death* c. 1795–96 to produce three “separate pulls”; in 1805, he reprinted *Newton* and *Nebuchadnezzar* to produce a separate pull and two sequential pulls respectively. Only twenty-nine of these impressions are extant; monoprints of *Elohim* (290), *Satan* (292B), *Nebuchadnezzar* (304), and *Newton* (307B), all from the 1795 printing, are untraced (PP 53–58).

Blake sold three monoprints by mid-1796 to Thomas Butts, his main patron, and another eight to him in 1805. These eleven, all signed, were long thought to be the only monoprints that Blake sold in his lifetime (Butlin p. 157). Recent studies into Blake’s practice as an artist, however, reveal that he signed drawings and paintings upon sale and that he sold at least nine monoprints between 1806 and 1809, probably to the same unknown collector (PP 68–69). Blake may have sold *Nebuchadnezzar* 304 by 1805 (PP 65); we can only speculate about *Elohim* 290 because its provenance is unknown. These sales and possible sales mean that Catherine Blake inherited only eleven or twelve monoprints. She may have sold *Naomi* 300 and *Lamech* 298, a possibility raised by their having no known provenances before entering the collection of J. W. Pease in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. All the other monoprints Blake left at his death can be traced back to her and to Frederick Tatham (1805–1878), one of the young artists who befriended Blake in his old age and who formed a group that called Blake the “Interpreter” and themselves the “Ancients.” Tatham cared for the widowed Catherine Blake and came to possess all of Blake’s effects after she died in October 1831. He did not inherit these works in a legal sense; no will is extant. He claimed in his “Life of Blake” manuscript, c. 1832, that Catherine had “bequeathed” to him the

copperplates “as well as all of his Works that remained unsold at [her] Death being writings, paintings.”⁹

Tracing Blake’s unsold monoprints in the first half of the nineteenth century reveals much new information about the market for and dissemination and reception of Blake’s works at the time, as well as John Ruskin’s acquisitions and the presence of a major unknown Blake collector. The key documents and events to be examined are:

I. *“a List of Works by Blake, offered for sale by his widow, to Mr. Ferguson,” compiled by Tatham, c. 1829, which, according to W. M. Rossetti, alluded to “seven” monoprints (Life I 366);*

II. *the print seller Joseph Hogarth’s note acknowledging Tatham as the source of “many” of his Blake works (Partington 670) and the catalogue of Hogarth’s 1854 auction of his stock, which included four monoprints (Sale Cat., Southgate and Barret, 7–30 June 1854);*

III. *John Ruskin’s letter listing five monoprints he wanted to retain from a “portfolio of Blake’s drawings” that he purchased from and returned—minus at least three works—to Hogarth in 1842 (Letters 32–33), and letters to John Scott and Dominic Colnaghi in 1855 and 1857 expressing his willingness to sell three Blake drawings (National Art Library, FD 6.I, Victoria and Albert Museum);*

IV. *the auction and sale catalogues in London between 1818–1854 that record the prices that Blake’s works were fetching (Sale Cat.);*

V. *the auction catalogue of a major Blake collection sold at Sotheby’s in 1862, which included five monoprints and about 370 drawings, sketches, and prints in forty-five lots (Sale Cat., Sotheby’s, 29 April 1862).*

By investigating these documents, as well as Ruskin’s recollections of the portfolio’s monoprints, other works from Hogarth in the 1862 Sotheby’s auction, and Tatham’s mode of selling Blake’s works, we will be able to demonstrate that Ruskin’s portfolio was part of the Blake collection sold at Sotheby’s in 1862. Doing so will enable us to identify many of the drawings and sketches that comprised the 1842 portfolio and to refute the consensus view in Blake studies that Tatham was the vendor of the 1862 auction. The appendix will claim that the vendor was an unknown mid-nineteenth century collector of “modern art” whose Blake works were once Tatham’s but acquired mostly from Hogarth in the 1840s. It contests the unstated assumption that Tatham withheld hundreds of Blake images from the market—including five monoprints—between 1842 and 1862, and it revises the provenance records of hundreds of Blake works. Moreover, this

appendix reveals for the first time the seriousness of Ruskin’s early flirtation with collecting Blake.

[Table 1](#) identifies the eleven or twelve monoprints that were once Catherine Blake’s; the ones Tatham offered to James Ferguson on her behalf; the five monoprints on Ruskin’s wish list, including three he appears to have purchased; the full group of monoprints probably in the portfolio; the monoprints sold at Sotheby’s in 1862; and the monoprints that entered the Burgess and Pease collections after the 1862 sale.

Table 1. monoprints left at Blake’s death, 1827, as they moved through the nineteenth century

Ferguson	Portfolio	Ruskin/purchased.		Title	Butlin	Auction	Burgess coll.	Pease coll.
	P			1. <i>House of Death</i>	322	1862		
	P			2. <i>Good & Bad Angels</i>	324	1862		
F	P			3. <i>Christ Appearing</i>	327	1862	Pease
F	P	R		4. <i>Nebuchadnezzar</i>	302	1862		
F	P	R		5. <i>Elijah/God Judging Adam</i>	296	1862		
?F	?P			6. <i>Elohim</i>	290	untraced		
F	P	R	x	7. <i>Newton</i>	307B	untraced		
F	P	R	x	8. <i>Satan</i>	292B	untraced		
	P	R	?x	9. <i>Hecate</i>	318		Burgess	Pease
F	?P			10. <i>Pity</i>	312		?Burgess	Pease
	?P			11. <i>Naomi</i>	300		Pease
	?P			12. <i>Lamech</i>	298		Pease

Table 2. Four monoprints sold at Joseph Hogarth’s auction in 1854

Title	Butlin #	Auction	Title at Auction	Signature
1. <i>Nebuchadnezzar</i>	303	1854	“Nebuchadnezzar”	WBlake 1795
2. <i>House of Death</i>	321	1854	“The Plague”	WBlake 1795
3. <i>Newton</i>	307	1854	“Archimedes”	Fresco W Blake inv.
4. <i>Christ Appearing</i>	326	1854	“Our Saviour appearing to His Disciples”	Fresco W Blake inv.

James Ferguson, Frederick Tatham, W. M. Rossetti

According to Gilchrist, “a gentleman in the far north, Mr. James Ferguson, an artist who writes from Tynemouth, took copies of three or four of the Engraved Books” (*Life* I 366). Gilchrist implies that Ferguson wrote Catherine Blake to order illuminated books sometime between the death of Blake in August of 1827 and her death in October of 1831. Bentley narrows this range by showing that Ferguson was in Tynemouth between 1824 and 1830, with a stay in London in 1827, though where and exactly when he does not say (“Peripatetic” 19). Tatham’s letter of 11 April 1829 to an unknown patron was presumably the kind of letter he sent to Ferguson and to other potential patrons. He identified himself as acting “In behalf of the widow of the late William Blake” and states

that, should you, Sir, be inclined to possess, for the embellishment of your own collection, and the benefit of the widow, any of the enumerated works, they shall be carefully sent to you upon your remitting the payment, and I will take proper care that your Kindness shall be rewarded with the best impressions

(BR2 495, *emphasis added*)

Bentley has suggested that the patron may have been either Ferguson or Lord Egremont of Petworth, Sussex (BR2 496). Both bought works from Catherine Blake around this time, but Ferguson bought copies of “Blake’s books,” presumably what Tatham meant as “impressions,” whereas Lord Egremont bought Blake’s painting of Spenser’s *The Fairie Queene* (Butlin 811). Egremont’s acquisition that August for £84 removed—or greatly lessened—the necessity for Catherine to earn an income from printing posthumous copies of Blake’s engravings and illuminated books (“PB” par. 124).

According to W. M. Rossetti, “In a List of Works by Blake, offered for sale by his widow, to Mr. Ferguson . . . occurs the following item: --- / *A work called Outhoun. 12 Plates, 6 inches more or less. Price, £2.2s.0d*”.¹⁰ The list—presumably “enumerating works” compiled by Tatham from memory—confused “Oothoon,” the main character of Blake’s *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, with that work’s title. Ferguson appears to have acquired *Visions* copy N, a beautiful late copy printed in 1818 (along with copies P and Q, which had already been sold), and to have also acquired *America a Prophecy* copy N and *Europe a Prophecy* copy I, printed in Spring of 1829 by Catherine Blake (“PB” par. 36). In addition to *Outhoun* and other book titles, the “List of Works” apparently included an undefined category, perhaps called “large designs

in colours” or “prints in oil,” which also included the number “seven” but no entries or titles.¹¹ We know this because, on 6 November 1862, Rossetti wrote Tatham about “seven” unidentified works apparently “alluded” to on the Ferguson list.

Rossetti’s letter to Tatham, like Tatham’s “List,” is not extant, but from Tatham’s response we can infer Rossetti’s questions: What were the last Blakes you sold? What were the titles and techniques of the seven works that you alluded to on Mr. Ferguson’s list? Tatham’s response, sent the same day, exists only as transcribed—with ellipses—by Rossetti:

Forest Gate, Essex,
6 November 1862

Dear Sir, — I shall have much pleasure in replying; but it will not always be possible for me to remember, as I have sold Mr Blake’s works for thirty years. I will take them in your order. Mr Evans bought nearly all I had latterly. . . . The List directed to Mr Ferguson of Tynemouth: This I forget, but I have no doubt they alluded to a batch of very fine ones printed in oil and painted on in water afterwards by Blake himself. They were printed in a loose press from an outline sketched on paste-board; the oil colour was blotted on, which gave the sort of impression you will get by taking the impression of anything wet. There was a look of accident about this mode which he afterwards availed of, and tinted so as to bring out and favour what was there rather blurred. I do not know that I can tell you these seven: but Nebuchadnezzar was one; Pity like a New-born Babe, Newton; The Saviour another, Eve with the Serpent another, Elijah in the Chariot another; and the seventh I do not remember. . . .

The finished plates have not been in my possession for many years . . . The printing in oil was a favourite system, as he coloured them up: he did a good many, of other subjects, in this way. . . .

(*Papers, 1862–1870*, 16)

Tatham recalled *Nebuchadnezzar* 302, *Pity* 312, *Newton* 307B, *Christ Appearing* 327, *Satan* 292B, and *Elijah/God Judging Adam* 296. He may have forgotten *Elohim* 290 or *Hecate* 318.

Rossetti read the Ferguson “List” as cataloguer and not, like Gilchrist, as biographer. He needed to check titles and techniques to see if his own lists were correct and the media correctly identified. Were the “seven” designs Pictures or Drawings? Did they belong to Rossetti’s List I, “Of Works in Colours,” or List II, “Uncoloured Works,” or List III, “Works of Unascertained Method” (*Life* II vii–viii)? Titles and techniques were some of the “disputable points” in Gilchrist’s biography that prompted

Rossetti to consult Tatham. Writing many years after the fact, Rossetti says:

I was put into communication with [Tatham] by Mrs Gilchrist, with a view to clearing up some disputable points in the Life by Gilchrist, and more especially to further the compilation, which I had undertaken, of a Catalogue Raisonne of Blake's paintings and designs, to form a portion of the Gilchrist volumes – as in fact it now does. Mr. Tatham was, when I knew him, a man well advanced in middle age, of rather bulky but far from tall figure, with an expressive face and tone of conversation. He was by profession a sculptor, but I think with little incoming practice. Afterwards he became a Minister in the Irvingite Church—perhaps an “Angel.”

(*Papers*, 1862–1870, 16)

Rossetti did not know Tatham as a young man, whose first two works exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1825 were portraits and who was then listed as “Miniature Painter and Sculptor” (Graves VII 325). He exhibited marble busts at the Royal Academy only in 1830, 1831, and 1832. He returned to the Royal Academy in 1835 and continued to exhibit works there until 1854. In all, he exhibited forty-eight drawings and portraits in watercolors and pastels, specializing in children's portraiture. Anne Gilchrist was right about his having been “originally a sculptor” and having “abandoned that early” (A. Gilchrist 130–1).¹² He was listed as “small portrait draughtsman” and “artist” in the Censuses of 1851 and 1861 respectively, and as “Minister” only in 1871, of the Catholic Apostolic Church (Irvingite) in Kentish Town.¹³ Perhaps Rossetti forgot, but it was Tatham, at the urging of Anne Gilchrist, who first contacted him. Tatham was residing in a “very small” house with his wife Louisa, invalid sister Harriet, and daughters Beatrice, Frederica, and Gertrude (14, 20, and 22 years old) at 2 Maria Terrace, Odessa Road West Ham, or “Forest Gate, Essex,” when, on 5 November 1862, he wrote Rossetti the heretofore unpublished letter:

Forest Gate, Essex,
5 November 1862

Dear Sir,

In consequence of a letter I receive this morning from Mrs Gilchrist I have the pleasure to communicate with you. It would not be convenient for me to see you here now as I have an invalid staying with me & my House is very small & I have no works by W. Blake left except a few prints of the Dante & some loose proof impressions of the Job very much soiled. These you must know well. But any question you wish to

ask me if you will favour me with a line I shall be most happy to reply to. Or I would meet you in London someday. I wrote very voluminously to the late W. Gilchrist in order to accelerate him as well as to give as real & veracious a character to his Biography as my knowledge would enable me but I shall be most happy to give you also any information in my power

Believe me Dear Sir
Very faithfully yours
Frederick Tatham¹⁴

Tatham probably welcomed the opportunity to assist Rossetti, who responded the following day. As noted, Rossetti wanted to know titles, and since he knew *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Newton*, and the other works that Tatham recalled, versions of which were in Capt. Butts' collection (though the one forgotten title might have caused some anxiety), he apparently concluded that he had included—in “List No. 1. Works in Colour”—all of Blake's works that were “Colour-printed.” He was mistaken, for he identified *Satan* 292 as a tempera (II 230, 179), apparently not recognizing Tatham's having identified it (“*Eve with the Serpent*”) as a print, and thus, in effect, Rossetti missed at least one. Moreover, he identified the watercolor *Judgment of Paris* (Butlin 675), dated 1811, as a color print, which prevented him from recognizing that the monoprints comprised a group of works all executed in the same year. Nevertheless, Rossetti was presumably relieved that he already knew the works that Catherine Blake put up for sale and that they were—or most of them were—*prints*. Thinking he knew printed and painted versions of the “seven” designs, Rossetti appears not to have taken the matter with Ferguson further. He was not interested in provenance other than for works once belonging to Butts, nor in tracing versions of printed works. Hence, we know that Catherine Blake offered Ferguson a group of seven monoprints, but have no documents confirming whether he bought any or passed on all of them.

Circumstantial evidence examined below suggests that Ferguson passed on them all and that Tatham had inherited the six he recalled as well as *Good and Evil Angels* 324, *Hecate* 318, and *House of Death* 322. If Catherine Blake did not sell *Lamech* 298 and *Naomi* 300, then they passed through Tatham's hands as well; the unknown provenance of untraced *Elohim* 290 does not rule out Tatham's early ownership. Hence, Tatham inherited at least nine monoprints and at most twelve.

Joseph Hogarth, “Printseller & Publisher”

In a copy of J. T. Smith’s *Nollekens and his Times*, Hogarth wrote: “Fred Tatham was Blake’s executor and possessed several of his drawings, many of which I purchased from him” (Partington 670). Hogarth’s purchases had to have begun after 6 November 1838, when J. J. G. Wilkinson wrote: “A few days ago I was introduced by my friend Mr Elwell to a Mr. Tathans [sic], an artist, who possesses *all* the drawings left by Blake” (BR2 557, italics added).¹⁵ By the Fall of 1842, Hogarth had sold a large “portfolio of Blake’s drawings” to John Ruskin, making Tatham’s claim to have *all* the drawings true only until Hogarth acquired “many” of them. In 1840, Tatham moved to Winchester, a move that may have prompted his selling Blake’s monoprints to Hogarth and selling volumes of drawings, sketches, and prints, aka Blakeana.¹⁶ Tatham was back in London in 1842 (Graves VII 325), which provides an end date for his major transaction with Hogarth, because the portfolio’s sale was negotiated by George Richmond, another of the “Ancients”—and, having married Julia Tatham in 1831, Tatham’s brother-in-law. Richmond had met the twenty-one year old Ruskin in Rome in late 1840 and introduced him to Blake’s works. That Richmond sent Ruskin to Hogarth instead of Tatham implies that Tatham’s stock of Blake’s works had been greatly depleted by the fall of 1842, when Ruskin returned from Italy.

By “drawings,” Hogarth meant unique works on paper, including monoprints, watercolor drawings, wash drawings, drawings in pencil, pen and ink, and sketches. No etchings, relief etchings, or engravings by Blake were in his 1854 inventory—nor, as we will see, do any appear to have been in the 1842 portfolio. Like “drawings,” “several” and “many” are imprecise terms; “many” could refer to between eighty and one hundred various kinds of drawings and sketches bundled in fewer than ten volumes or “scrapbooks,” which is how Tatham sold such works by Blake (see below) and how Hogarth (and sellers and auctioneers in general) sold sketches, drawings, and prints, bundling many per lot. The portfolio’s exact contents are not known, but from Ruskin’s comments we can infer that it was substantial in size. Ruskin feared that Blake “in the mass” would upset his father, to whom he made “frequent assurances that I should never be so captivated by any other” artist than Turner (*Letters* 32). On these grounds he returned the portfolio to Hogarth, telling Richmond he hoped to “retain four of the Larger Drawings, —the Horse, the owls, the Newton, and the Nebuchadnezzar—or five includ-

ing the Satan and Eve, and the Goblin Huntsman, and Search for the Body of Harold” (*Letters* 32–3). As we will see, he appears to have returned two or three of these drawings with the rest of the portfolio and acquired only four or five of them.

Ruskin’s “Goblin Huntsman” was the pencil drawing *Let Loose the Dogs of War* (Butlin 331); *The Search for the Body of Harold* is untraced; it is recorded as possibly being in “pencil” (Butlin 61); “the owls” was *Hecate* 318, the first pull of the design; “the Horse” most likely referred to *Elijah/God Judging Adam* 296, the design’s highly finished separate pull. The “Horse” theoretically could refer to *Pity* 312, but this third pull of the *Pity* design was very thin and, compared to the others he listed, neither finished nor “characteristic” of the medium. Robertson correctly described it as “a very poor copy, pale in printing and carelessly coloured by hand” (Preston 45). Ruskin examined *Nebuchadnezzar* 302, *Newton* 307B, and *Satan* 292B, all of which were probably first pulls (PP 56–65).¹⁷ *Newton* 307B and *Satan* 292B are untraced and have been confused with *Newton* 307 and *Satan* 292. Hogarth sold *Newton* 307 (lot 5,509), and he is mistakenly thought to have sold *Satan* 292. As a result, Ruskin appears to have examined *Newton* 307 and *Satan* 292 and returned them with the portfolio to Hogarth, who appears to have disbursed the contents for stock, selling what remained of it in 1854. However, Hogarth did not sell a version of *Satan*, and the version of *Newton* that he sold was *signed* and did not pass through Tatham. Confusing Ruskin’s versions with Hogarth’s versions has distorted the reception history of Blake’s monoprints and needs to be corrected before we can connect the portfolio to the Sotheby auction of 1862.

In June 1854, Hogarth dissolved his partnership with Elhanan Bicknell (1813–1860), the son of the wealthy businessman and art patron Elhanan Bicknell (1788–1861), who collected Turner and also owned a few Blake works, including the *Tiriel* drawings and manuscript that he bought at the Hogarth auction (BB 449). They auctioned much of their stock over eighteen days, 7–30 June 1854, at Southgate and Barret. Seventy-six Blake drawings and sketches, including four monoprints, were sold in sixteen of the auction’s 7,761 lots and brought in around £20. The Blake works comprised a tiny fraction of Hogarth’s stock, which at the time numbered well over 150,000 images—and that was not all of his stock.¹⁸

The four monoprints that Hogarth sold in 1854 were signed and thus did not come from Tatham or the portfolio (see [Table 2](#)). Hogarth sold *Christ Appearing* 326 as “Our Saviour appearing

to His Disciples, *in colours*,” and *Nebuchadnezzar* 303 as “Nebuchadnezzar, *in colours*.”¹⁹ Both were signed “WBlake 1795” and sold for 8 shillings and £2.7 respectively. Hogarth also sold *Newton* 307 as “Archimedes, *in colours*,” and *House of Death* 321 as “The Plague, *in colours*.” Both were signed “Fresco W Blake inv” and sold for 8 shillings and £1 respectively. Blake appears to have signed these monoprints between c. 1807 and 1810 and sold them to same collector (PP 68–69). When and from whom Hogarth acquired them are unknown, but they were possibly acquired together from the original collector or a descendant, and almost certainly after assembling the portfolio for Ruskin.

Hogarth also sold, for 18 shillings, the untraced “The Almighty accusing Eve, *in colours*” (lot 1,922), which Bentley identifies as *Satan* 292 (*Sale Cat.*). However, equating a youthful, bat-winged, beardless virile warrior hovering in flames with shield and spear to Jehovah—always depicted by Blake as bearded, aged, and weaponless—is not credible. Being described as “in colours” is not enough to identify it as a monoprint. *Agony in the Garden* (Butlin 843), the *Fall of the Damned* (Butlin 844), and “1 other” (lot 3,270), which sold for £1.3, were also described as being “in colours,” as was “Subject from the Apocalypse, *in colours*” (not in Butlin; lot 3,705), which sold for five shillings. All are untraced.

Satan 291 has also been confused with an untraced work. Bentley thinks it sold as *Satan Traversing the Realms of Space* in Butts, Jr.’s 29 June 1853 auction (lot 83; *Sale Cat.*). This is very doubtful. The title *Satan traversing the Realms of Space* does not describe the monoprint; ignoring the bottom half of the design, it does not mention Eve or serpent, nor does it correctly depict Satan’s position and act. Satan hovers amidst a wall of flames and fills the design’s entire width; the image is flat and closed and signals no open space to traverse. Butlin is surely correct to suspect that *Satan Traversing* “may refer to another work” (Butlin 291), now presumably untraced, like *Christ and the Seven Virgins* and *Raising Jairus’ Daughter* (Butlin 430, 418)—the two temperas that sold with *Satan Traversing*. The work called *Satan Traversing the Realms of Space* appears, then, to have been a different work, not the monoprint, uncatalogued by Rossetti and now untraced. This means that Hogarth’s four monoprints were the first of Blake’s monoprints to be sold publicly.²⁰

Butlin raises the possibility that versions of *Newton* and *Satan* are untraced. Of *Newton* 307, he says: “Unless there was a third, untraced copy of this print, this was at one time offered by

Tatham to ‘Mr. Ferguson of Tynemouth’ . . . and also offered by the dealer Joseph Hogarth, the source for whose Blakes seems to have been Tatham, to Ruskin in about 1843.” Of *Satan* 292, Butlin says: “. . . assuming that they [the seven prints alluded to on Ferguson’s list] were not bought by Ferguson it is just possible that these same works could have passed to Hogarth. Otherwise a third, untraced version of the print must have existed.” Butlin is correct to suspect third, untraced versions of both *Newton* and *Satan*, here referred to as 307B and 292B. The fact that Tatham had versions of these designs to offer Ferguson in c. 1829 *necessarily* indicates third versions because the extant versions were not in Catherine’s or Tatham’s collection: *Newton* 306 entered Butts’ collection in 1805; *Newton* 307 can be traced to an unknown collector around 1809; *Satan* 291 entered Butts’s collection by mid-1796; and *Satan* 292 can be traced to the same unknown collector as *Newton* 307 between 1806 and 1807 (PP 69). Moreover, the two extant versions of *Newton* were printed in 1795 and 1805, which means, given that Blake systematically printed at least two pulls from each monoprint matrix in 1795, the second impression from 1795 is missing. Blake’s practice, in other words, reinforces the idea that *Newton* 307B existed, was printed in 1795, and was the copy seen by Ruskin.

Newton 307B and *Satan* 292B were the versions of the designs that were alluded to on Tatham’s list to Ferguson. They and the other five monoprints on that list remained unsold at the time of Catherine Blake’s death in 1831 and were inherited by Tatham. They were sold by 1842 to Hogarth, along with many other drawings and sketches. The seven monoprints on the Ferguson list, and possibly two more, were presumably in the “portfolio of Blake’s drawings” that Hogarth compiled for Ruskin.

John Ruskin, Blake Collector

Shortly after his purchase, Ruskin wrote Richmond asking if he could once again intercede with Hogarth on his behalf, this time to arrange for the portfolio’s *return*, minus the five monoprints and two drawings that he wanted to “retain.” In this letter, Ruskin expresses his earliest understanding and appreciation of Blake—and misgivings. He gives a good idea of the portfolio’s size, but conflicting reasons for returning it. He tells Richmond that since

I last saw you I have been looking very carefully over the portfolio of Blake’s drawings, and I have got nervous about showing them to my father when he comes home, in the mass. He has been very good

to me—lately—with respect to some efforts which I desired to make under the idea that Turner would not long be able to work—and these efforts he has made under my frequent assurances that I should never be so captivated by any other man. Now I am under great fear that when he hears of my present purchase, it will make him lose confidence in me, and cause him discomfort which I wish I could avoid. If, therefore, I could *diminish* the *quantity*, and *retain a few only* of the most *characteristic*, I should be glad.

(*Letters* 33, emphasis added).

The problem with the portfolio was not its cost, but its timing and, surprisingly, its size, which dwarfed Ruskin's nascent Turner collection.

Cook and Wedderburn, Ruskin's editors, date the letter to Richmond—and thus Ruskin's acquisition of Blake's drawings—as c. 1843 (*Letters* 32n). The letter's date, however, is Fall of 1842, as a close examination of Ruskin's references to Turner reveals. Ruskin had begun collecting Turner drawings in 1837, when his father purchased *Richmond Bridge, Surrey*, which “remained for at least two years our only Turner possession.” In the Fall of 1839, the Ruskins acquired *Gosport*, followed by *Winchelsea* and *Harlech* in 1840 (Ruskin, *Praeterita*, Vol. ii, 255–7). “In the winter of 1841–1842,” Turner offered Mr. Griffith, his agent, fifteen sketches made years earlier in Switzerland and proposed to make finished watercolor drawings of ten of them if Griffith could find buyers. Turner “made anticipatorily four [drawings], to manifest what their quality would be, and honestly ‘show his hand’ . . . at his sixty-five years of age—whether it shook or not, or had otherwise lost its cunning” (Ruskin, *Turner* 477). Convincing his father in 1842 to allow him to *commission* Turner drawings, however, took some “effort.” It seemed risky at the time because they were to be worked up from sketches and finished in a style unlike earlier drawings by the now elderly Turner.²¹

Ruskin wrote his father asking permission to purchase Turner's *Splügen Pass*, hoping he would return “home in time to see it, and give me leave. Of more than one drawing I had no hope, for my father knew the worth of eighty guineas; we had never before paid more than from fifty to seventy guineas before for Turner drawings” (480). Ruskin's delay cost him *Splügen Pass*, but his disappointment softened his father, who told him that he “might have *one* of the sketches realized. He went with me, and chose with me . . .” (481). “By hard coaxing, and petitioning, I got my father's leave to promise to take a Lucerne Town, if it turned out well!” It did, and his relieved father exclaimed: “I was sure

you would be saddled with that drawing” (481–82).²² With his father, Ruskin had chosen a sketch of *Coblentz* and purchased Mr. Griffith's *Constance*, noting “the day I brought that drawing home to Denmark Hill was one of the happiest in my life” (483). In 1843, Ruskin's “father allowed” him to purchase *St. Sothard* and the powerfully sublime *Goldau* under the same conditions as in 1842 (484). Ruskin's editors read the Turner reference as referring to either the 1842 or 1843 commissions and consequently date the Richmond letter as “c. 1843.” However, the “effort” needed to convince his father that the elderly Turner was a safe bet was true only in 1842, not the following year when they knew what to expect. Ruskin appears certainly to be referencing the 1842 acquisitions, which in turn dates the letter to Richmond and the “portfolio of Blake's drawings” to 1842.

At £84 per drawing, Ruskin's three 1842 commissions cost £256. The portfolio of Blake drawings cost £100—and if not for Richmond, “I should probably have paid 150 instead of 100.” However, after purchasing the portfolio he tells Richmond: “several circumstances have since taken place, . . . which make me feel unwilling to ask my father for this sum at present to be so spent” (*Letters* 32–33). He also reassures him that he was returning the *portfolio*, not rejecting *Blake*, that the problem was not Blake's works but the response he anticipated from his father: “Forgive me this. I do assure you *I* love the memory of your friend, and I shall love *these* drawings and never part with them, but I am afraid of giving pain to my Father” (33). Financial considerations, though, seem like the weakest reason for returning the portfolio. Money was not the problem—Blake was—or at least he was “in the mass.” Ruskin, therefore, needed to “diminish” the size of the portfolio to reduce Blake's presence in the house.

“Fear” of the expenditure and his father's disapproval appear to have masked Ruskin's more serious concerns. He could not admit to Richmond, or perhaps to himself, that in “quantity” Blake's works were uneven in quality. Given that the portfolio contained a life-time of drawings and sketches left at the time of Blake's death, such unevenness was not unusual. It seems, however, to have become an issue only after his “looking very carefully over the portfolio of Blake's drawings” and imagining showing them to his father. His initial experience of the portfolio rivaled that of *Constance*. He recalled the event forty-four years later, in the obituary of the wood engraver Arthur Burgess (?1844–1887), Ruskin's friend and associate, who had, by 1878,

acquired *Hecate* 318 and *Nebuchadnezzar* 304—and possibly a few other monoprints. Ruskin describes Burgess as having “pos-
sessed himself of some of Blake’s larger drawings—known to
me many and many a year before. George Richmond had *shown*
them to me—with others— . . . I bought the *whole series of them at*
once; —carried it home triumphantly—and made myself un-
happy over it—and George Richmond again delivered me from
thralldom of their possession” (*Century Hobby Horse*, April 1887,
47, italics added).²³

Ruskin returned the portfolio minus a few “characteristic”
works, limiting his wish list to seven designs, presumably so not
to exceed the number of Turner works in his collection at the
time. Retaining a few works of a returned portfolio, however, was
not pro-forma. In a follow up letter to Richmond, Ruskin writes:
“Best thanks for your kind note. I have spoken to Hogarth, who
says he will think over it, and arrange it to my satisfaction. After
I hear his proposals I will make mine” (*Letters* 33n2). Apparently,
Hogarth agreed and Ruskin returned the portfolio, but he seems
to have retained only four or five of the seven works he listed.
As we will see, he returned *Nebuchadnezzar* 302 and *Elijah/God*
Judging Adam 296 (“the Horse”), and he kept *Let loose the Dogs of*
War, which Rossetti recorded as being in Ruskin’s collection (*Life*
II 241). He apparently kept three or four of the other designs as
well, as is revealed in a letter on 4 May 1855 to John Scott (of Col-
naghi and Scott, the print dealers): “I indeed, some day or other,
intend to part with three drawings of Blake’s . . . which I don’t
want, but I believe there is no demand . . . at present, and I don’t
mean to lose money on what I gave for them.” On 3 February
1857, he wrote Dominic Colnaghi about selling him his copy of
Claude’s *Liber Veritatis* and concludes: “I would throw the Blake
drawings in at five pounds each.”²⁴

Ruskin’s asking price, which was not necessarily the price he
paid in 1842, was many times what Blake’s drawings, illustrations,
paintings, and illuminated books were then realizing. These, the
only known references of Ruskin apparently having acted on
his wish list, allow us to speculate on the identity of the “three
drawings.” The high price per work suggests that they were all
monoprints, which in turn suggests *Satan* 292B, *Newton* 307B,
and *Hecate* 318. Alternatively, one of the three may have been *The*
Search for the Body of Harold; if so, then *Harold* was not a pencil
drawing (Butlin 61), like *Searching Among the Dead on a Battlefield*
(Butlin 197), a design recorded by Rossetti (II. 253), but, given its
price, a work more materially substantial. Like *Satan* 292B and

Newton 307B, *Harold* is untraced, which suggests that the three
works may have been sold together and suffered the same fate.
Or their shared status may be a coincidence.

We do not know if Ruskin returned *Hecate* 318, sold it with the
other monoprints, or sold it separately. We do know that he did
not keep his promise to “love *these* [seven] drawings and never
part with them.” Rossetti, not interested in provenance, did not
record any monoprints as once belonging to Ruskin. For one
brief moment in 1842, though, with the purchase of the portfolio,
Ruskin had come to possess the third largest Blake collection of
the day, after Thomas Butts and John Linnell, Blake’s first and
last patrons.

Blake in the Marketplace, 1818–1863

How large was the “portfolio of Blake’s drawings”? Can its
size and contents be approximated?

In 1857, Ruskin was asking “five pounds each” for drawings
from the portfolio, which was many times what Blake works
were fetching between Blake’s death and Gilchrist’s *Life*. Cop-
ies of *The Grave*, *Night Thoughts*, and the *Book of Job* appeared
regularly at auctions and in sale catalogues during this period,
selling between £1.10 and £3.3—or under two shillings a design.
Illuminated books were selling for even less. *Songs* copy P, print-
ed c. 1805, came to market bound in two volumes in red morocco
and fifty-four gilt leaves and was sold at Saunders & Hodgson
on 26 April 1826 for just £1.0.0, or about 4.4 pence a page. It sold
seven years later with the property of P. A. Hanrott for £2.1.0,
which was less than one shilling per image.²⁵ *Songs* copy BB, a
monochrome copy with fifty-five plates, sold for £1.0.0 in Janu-
ary of 1830. William Young Ottley’s monochrome copy of *Jerusa-*
lem [A], for which he paid Blake £5.5.0 a day before Blake died
(BB 258), sold at Sotheby’s in 1837 for £3.10.0 to Bohn—100 prints
for around 8.4 pence a print!

Blake’s great series of book illustrations fared no better. The
116 large watercolor drawings (42 x 32.5 cm.) to *Gray’s Poems* sold
at Flaxman’s auction in 1828 for £8.8.0 (Butlin 335), which was
just 1.4 shillings per drawing, with the entire series of drawings
selling for less than a tenth of Ruskin’s portfolio.²⁶ The portfolio’s
evaluation was twice that of the fifty guineas reserve placed in
1828 and in 1830 on the *Night Thoughts’* 537 watercolor drawings
(42 x 32.5 cm.) completed on 269 sheets of “imperial folio paper,
which is again inlaid to a larger size. . . bound in 2 vol. red morocco
extra, gilt leaves, joints, &c.” The drawings, at 1.9 shillings each,

were bought in both years (Butlin 330).²⁷ The nineteen watercolor or drawings for *The Grave* (ranging between 15.0 x 11.9 cm. and 33.2 x 29.7 cm.) sold in 1836 for £11.0, which was about 1 shilling each.²⁸ With two exceptions, finished drawings and paintings would not come to the art market until Butts, Jr. auctioned most of his father's collection of watercolor drawings and tempera paintings in 1852, 1853, and 1854. Most of these works were the size of the Gray watercolors or smaller and sold on average for under £2.²⁹ The same was true of the Blake works that sold at Hogarth's auction in 1854 and at Sotheby's auction in 1862, where works "in colours" sold for under £2.

With such precedents and Blake's market showing no signs of improving, how did Hogarth evaluate Blake's "larger drawings" in 1842? He apparently referenced the two exceptions: *The Five Wise and the Five Foolish Virgins* and *The Dream of Queen Catherine* (Butlin 481, 549). These two highly finished drawings sold in 1830 at Christie's as part of the Sir Thomas Lawrence collection for £8.15.0 and £4.4.6 respectively. Both drawings were commissioned c. 1825 by Lawrence for £15.15 and were copies of works in Butts' collection (*Life* I 357-8). Hogarth knew of them, noting that "For Sir Thomas Lawrence, Blake made two Drawings—one of the Wise and Foolish Virgins—the other Shadrach and his companions coming from the Fiery furnace—for which Lawrence paid him twenty five guineas each" (Partington 670). Hogarth got the prices (and a title) wrong, but apparently thought there was money to be made from Blake's drawings—at least those highly finished in colors and characteristic. Even so, these prices are high only relative to Blake's other works; recall that Turner's *Constance*, at 17.2 x 26 cm., sold in 1842 for ten times more than Lawrence's Blake drawings, which are approximately 41 x 34.6 cm., and 210 times more than *Newton* 307, which is 44.2 x 57.8 cm. and sold for only 8 shillings in 1854.

Given the high cost of the portfolio and the low prices that Blake's work were then commanding—and the absence of high-end Blake drawings and paintings then outside the Butts and Linnell collections—the portfolio's "mass" necessarily comprised many more monochrome drawings and sketches than finished works in color. Nevertheless, had Ruskin kept the entire portfolio, the re-evaluation of Blake's reputation would have started a full generation before Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*. But he didn't, which raises two fundamental questions: What other works were in the portfolio and where did they go?

The portfolio, minus four or five works, was returned to

Hogarth, which makes his 1854 Blake inventory the first place to look. However, as noted, the monoprints—Hogarth's four most valuable works by Blake—did not come from Tatham and were not the ones Ruskin examined. All but two of the remaining seventy-two Blake works were monochrome drawings and rough sketches bundled together and fetching low prices. Lot 1095, for example, was "Historical Subjects . . . 13," which sold for £1.13; lot 5082 was "Frontispiece to Blake's Grave, the first idea, and various other Designs for his Book, etc. . . . 22," which sold for 16 shillings. Here, in two bundles, were thirty-five drawings and sketches selling for £2.9, or about 1.4 shillings a piece—the same rate as the larger and more highly finished book illustrations. More significant, none of the works Ruskin recalled seeing among "Blake's larger drawings" were among Hogarth's inventory. He recalled seeing "original studies for the illustrations to Young's *Night Thoughts*—and some connected with the more terrific subjects etched for the book of Job." Studies for these works are exceedingly rare, but they are among the "Original Drawings and Sketches, By W. Blake," sold at Sotheby's on 29 April 1862 as part of *A Valuable Collection of Engravings, Drawings and Pictures, Chiefly from the Cabinet of an Amateur*.

Two-thirds of this auction—about 165 of its 257 lots—was comprised of sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century prints, presumably the property of the Amateur. Most of the remaining lots comprised modern drawings and prints, including works by Blake, who was collected as an artist, not an engraver. The Blake collection comprised 376 individual designs and pages in forty-five lots (158–201), which brought in around £50, or about 2.6 shillings per image, while the rest of the items in the auction averaged 4.2 shillings. The Blake collection comprised four categories: drawings, colored book designs, illuminated prints, and rough sketches. The first thirty-two lots (158–186, 188–190) comprised 94 drawings in various media and finish and included a few of the "more terrific subjects etched for the book of Job": *Job's Sacrifice*, *Every Man Also Gave Him a Piece of Money*, *Alternative Composition*, and *Job and His Daughters* (lot 176; Butlin 552, 553, 556). It also included *The Complaint of Job* and *The Complaint of Job: 'What Is Man that Thou Shouldest Try Him Every Moment?'* (lot 164; Butlin 163, 164), along with two versions of the Job-like *The Death of Ezekiel's Wife* (lot 164; Butlin 165, 166). Ruskin's memory of designs for *Night Thoughts* was also accurate. *Jacob and the Angel*, a study for *Night Thoughts* 145 (Butlin 332, plate 39) was among thirty-three items in lots 200 and 201.

Monoprints in the 1842 portfolio were also among the drawings in the 1862 Blake collection. Ruskin's "the Horse" and "the Nebuchadnezzar," which referred to *Elijah/God Judging Adam* 296 and *Nebuchadnezzar* 302 and were returned to Hogarth, resurfaced in 1862 as "Elijah about to ascend in his Chariot" (lot 189) and "The Transformation of Nebuchadnezzar" (lot 190). Their presence in the 1862 Blake collection strongly suggests that *Good and Evil Angels* 324, *Christ Appearing* 327, and *House of Death* 322 in lots 182, 186, 188 were also from the 1842 portfolio. Indeed, the portfolio had to have had at least eight monoprints—the five Ruskin listed and these three that he did not list—to merit its £100 price tag. Assuming the monoprints were priced around £5 each, then the portfolio could have been *rationaly* evaluated between £40 and £45. For the lesser works comprising the "mass" of the portfolio, even at prices many times higher than the averages in the 1830s for such works—say 10 shillings an image rather than 1.5 shillings—the remaining £55 to £60 worth of drawings could amount to upward of a hundred drawings and sketches.

The "portfolio of Blake's drawings" appears to have comprised all or nearly all of the ninety-two drawings in the first group of the 1862 Blake collection. Twenty-three of the thirty-two lots in this first group comprised multiple drawings but recorded only one or two titles or subjects; most of the works so bundled (about fifty-two) remain unidentified or, if identified, are untraced. These features attest to their lowly aesthetic status and uneven quality, confirming what Ruskin presumably recognized about the drawings "in the mass." But Ruskin would have seen a few other fine works besides the monoprints, including: "A Design, apparently intended in illustration of a tale, *highly finished in indian ink*" (lot 184, not in Butlin), which sold for £2.12.0; "A Subject from early English History [*Edward III Presenting the Black Prince to the Barons* (lot 177, Butlin 66), *highly finished in colours*; and two others," which together sold for £1.6.0; *The Ordeal of Queen Emma* and *The Penance of Jane Shore in St Paul's Church* (lot 171, Butlin 59, 69), "*both highly finished in colours*," which together sold for £1.7.0; *Age Teaching Youth* and the color print *Lucifer and the Pope in Hell* (lot 185, Butlin 91, 287) "*both in colours*," which sold for 15 shillings.

The Blake collector owned other modern works that could only have come from Hogarth. For example: "The School, after Webster, R. A. by Lumb Stocks, *india proof before letters*; and the etching" (lot 214); "Village Recruits, after Wilkie, by Fox, first

India proofs before letters" (lot 217); and "The Cats Paw, after Landseer by Lewis, proof not quite finished" (lot 219) appear certainly to have been from Hogarth because he *owned the plates* of these three designs.³⁰ The Blake collector's fifteen "Works of the Sketching Society" (lots 237–42) were also from Hogarth, who supported the Society through exhibitions, sales, and reproductions.³¹ Hogarth advertised himself as the society's *only* distributor, and stated in the auction catalogue that "... this is the first sale in which any [works] have appeared, and as the Society is now dissolved it is not likely that any other opportunity will offer by which they can be obtained" (125).

Works of the Sketching Society were followed by thirteen "Framed Drawings" (lots 243–251) and ten "Paintings in Oils" (252–257), which closed the auction. The drawings and paintings probably belonged to the Blake collector because the artists represented—among them Luke Clennell (1781–1840), William Frederick Witherington (1786–1865), William Havell (1782–1857)—were "modern." It is probably not a coincidence that Hogarth was also a "Picture Frame Maker and Mounter of Prints and Drawings" (Simon, "Hogarth"). Such skills raise the possibility that he may have worked on *Lamech* 298 and *Naomi* 300. Both designs have chamfered corners and are the same size, making them the only monoprints self-evidently paired. *Lamech* 298 and *Naomi* 300, however, were trimmed of their chamfered corners and to the image and framed in fairly deep and heavy mid-nineteenth century frames.³² These shared features suggest the possibility that Hogarth removed the monoprints from the 1842 portfolio upon its return, or from Tatham's volume that was the source of the portfolio.³³

These various prints and drawings from Hogarth support the claim that the Blake works in the 1862 collection also came from Hogarth, which in turn suggests that Hogarth resold the portfolio—possibly reconfigured with fewer monoprints—to a regular customer.

Frederick Tatham as Blake's Agent

The portfolio's initial price of £150 raises the possibility that the other three groups of works comprising the 1862 Blake collection may also have been in the portfolio. The second group was comprised of forty-six colored illustrations from *Pilgrim's Progress* (lot 187) and *Small Book of Designs* copy B (lots 191–94).³⁴ These twenty-eight and eighteen designs respectively are richly colored, without text, and 13 x 18 cm. or smaller. The third

group (lots 195–197) was comprised of just three artifacts: *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copies e and i, both uncolored posthumous copies in reddish brown and light black, 43 and 40 plates, respectively, and one set of fifty minimally color printed *There is No Natural Religion* impressions, totaling 133 small images with texts and many duplicates. The fourth group, under the rubric of “Original Sketches and Studies, for many of his published designs, etc.” (lots 198–202) was comprised of seventy-five rough sketches or, as the dealer Francis Harvey referred to them, “scraps,” bundled without titles (e. g., lot 199: “Others 10”).³⁵

These groups may have been in the portfolio; alternatively, as groups of works similar in size and medium, they correspond to the way Tatham sold Blake works and may have been purchased separately from Hogarth and/or Tatham in volumes analogous to the portfolio. Bundling works by size and/or medium was conventional, but Tatham may have learned from his father, who sold portfolios of his drawings and prints at Christie’s, 9–10 July 1833. Of particular interest were “a volume, containing 180 drawings from antiquities in Rome, by C. H. Tatham, Esq.” (lot 117); a volume of ninety of his “original drawings” (lot 118); another volume containing “163 drawings and prints of antiquities” (lot 119); “a scrap book, containing 138 sketches made in Italy, etc. by C. H. Tatham, Esq.” (lot 120); “a scrap book, containing 39 drawings from antique fragments in the collection of Mr. Holland, by C. H. Tatham, Esq.” (lot 121); and “a large scrap book with leaves” (lot 122). Tatham had organized 610 large and small drawings of various quality into six “volumes” and “scrap books.” Tatham bought in lots 117 and 120, so the final tally was 292 drawings in just four lots, which sold for £16. On 23 July 1833, C. H. Tatham wrote Sir John Soane, whose agent was at the auction, to enquire if he would be interested in lot 117; he was and acquired the volume for £7 in November (“PB” par. 98).

Like father, like son. Frederick Tatham wrote Soane c. 1834 to enquire if he would be interested in purchasing any “portion” of his Blake collection. His letter reveals his father’s influence: “Hearing that your Collection is deservedly celebrated I beg to say that should you wish to add any of this very great mans productions to it I shall be happy to offer any portion of them to you at a reasonable rate.”³⁶ Frederick Tatham was prepared to sell Blakes by the pound. He wisely emphasized drawings, which Soane collected in very large quantities (e. g., over 9,000 drawings from the office of Robert and James Adams in fifty-seven portfolios or albums entered Soane’s collection in 1833). Tatham

implies that he could assemble portfolios or “scrap books” of miscellaneous Blake drawings and prints in substantial quantities.

Tatham appears not to have sold Blakes to Soane, but he did sell portions of his collection to Hogarth as well as to others. Robert Arthington of Leeds (1823–1900), the eccentric, evangelical philanthropist, acquired a “Collection of upwards of 60 engraved pages” (BB 131), a volume that sold at Sotheby’s in 1866 consisting of prints and proofs of *The Book of Thel*, *Europe*, *Jerusalem*, *The Book of Urizen*, *The Book of Ahania*, and *The Song of Los*; proofs of commercial prints; and eight posthumous prints from *Songs* copy n and *For the Sexes* copy J. George A. Smith, a major collector of prints, drawings, and “scrapbooks,” acquired another portion of Tatham’s collection, including the manuscript of the “Order of the Songs,” life-time proofs and discarded impressions from *Europe*, *America*, and *Jerusalem*, and posthumous impressions of *Experience* and *For the Sexes*.³⁷

Smith and Arthington did not build their collections item by item, as a collector would today. The low prices that most of Blake’s works on paper were then realizing at auctions and through print sellers made that impractical if not impossible. Selling slight drawings or small prints individually made no sense—or pence—for anyone. For Tatham, the money, such as it was, lay in bundling his wares wisely, as he understood when offering Soane “portions” of his collection—and was demonstrated by the portfolio and lots with multiple unidentified works in the 1854 and 1862 auctions. Nor was it in the interest of collectors of Blakeana to return numerous times to the same source for similar kinds of works. It is precisely because Blake’s pencil drawings, sketches, and prints were sold bundled in volumes from one deep source that Hogarth, Smith, Arthington, and the unknown Blake collector could assemble large collections with just a few acquisitions.

The collection’s size and origin of most, if not all, of its works have led scholars to assume that Tatham was the person who consigned it to auction (Butlin, “William Rossetti’s” 40, BR2 795n). While the works were once Tatham’s, they were not his when they sold at Sotheby’s. The person who consigned them in 1862 appears to have been a mid-nineteenth century collector of modern prints and drawings who bought works by Blake and other modern artists from Hogarth and possibly posthumous copies of *Songs* directly from Tatham. To imagine Tatham as vendor reveals impossible circumstances. If he had been the

vendor, it would mean that many hundreds of Blake works *were still with Tatham in 1842*, Richmond would have directed Ruskin to Tatham, and Hogarth's 1842 portfolio could not have had the monoprints cited by Ruskin. Moreover, Tatham as vendor implies that Tatham had either failed to have sold Blake's works or lied about doing so—or that Blake had nearly no audience or appeal at all during this period. Knowing that they were in an unknown private collection confirms the steady and growing interest in Blake's work in general and the printed paintings in particular. Hence, proving that Tatham sold portions of his Blake collection “over thirty years,” as he told Rossetti, is crucial to understanding Blake's mid-nineteenth-century market and reception.

Summary

The discovery that Blake signed works upon sale has helped to identify which monoprints Blake sold in his lifetime, which he may have sold, and which were inherited by Catherine Blake. On her behalf, Frederick Tatham had offered seven monoprints to James Ferguson, c. 1829; upon her death in October 1831, all, or nearly all, passed to Tatham, along with hundreds of drawings, sketches, prints, and copperplates. The exceptions were possibly *Elohim* 290, *Lamech* 298, and *Naomi* 300, whose earliest provenances are unknown (see [Table 1](#)).

By 1842, Tatham had sold a portion of his collection of Blake's drawings, including eight or nine monoprints, to Joseph Hogarth, who compiled a “portfolio of Blake's drawings” that John Ruskin purchased for £100. The monoprints were the money items; they and the few finished works in colors made up about £50 worth of material. The rest was made up of smaller, uncolored drawings and sketches. Ruskin returned the portfolio to Hogarth, minus four or five works. Its contents did not comprise the inventory of Blake's works in Hogarth's 1854 auction. Rather, the portfolio disappeared into a collection of an unknown collector. It resurfaced in 1862 as part of that collector's larger Blake collection, a collection unknown to Rossetti.³⁸ The book illustrations, prints, and rough sketches that made up the rest of the 1862 Blake collection were probably not part of the original portfolio but acquired from Hogarth and/or Tatham in separate volumes.

The monoprints in the Butts collection were sold in the early twentieth century. Four of the other nine or ten monoprints that Blake sold in his lifetime were in Hogarth's 1854 auction and were the first monoprints sold publicly (Table 2). Five others

resurfaced by 1862 (*Hecate* 317), 1863 (*Naomi* 299 and *Elijah/God Judging Adam* 295), c. 1878 (*Nebuchadnezzar* 304), and 1958 (*Pity* 311). The average sale price of the four monoprints in Hogarth's 1854 auction was £1.1.0; the average price of the five monoprints sold in the 1862 Sotheby auction was £2.2.0—and that was because *Nebuchadnezzar* 302 sold for £4; the average for the other four monoprints was £1.8. Blake charged Butts £1.1 in 1805 (*BR2* 764) and asked £5.5 in his 1818 letter to Dawson Turner (E 771), a sum not realized until 1865 when Halstead, a dealer, acquired *Newton* 307 at a Sotheby auction for £5.10 (Butlin 307). These low prices for any of Blake's works—let alone many of his best—shock us today, but they affirm Ruskin's comment to John Scott in 1855: “I believe there is no demand . . . at present,” responding, presumably, to the low prices brought in by the five large Blake sales of Blake's finest temperas, watercolors, and monoprints in 1852, 1853, and 1854.³⁹ In 1842, however, the “five pounds” that Ruskin claims to have paid for each of his “Blake drawings” was a record price for monoprints—and nearly Blake's final asking price in 1818.

Butlin suspects that the monoprints that recur on the various lists of Tatham, Ferguson, Ruskin, and Hogarth were “part of a more or less constant group, later to be acquired by Arthur Burgess c. 1880, and later still the source of the collection of prints formed by J. W. Pease at some time before his death in 1901” (p. 158). Pease acquired five *unsigned* monoprints: *Lamech* 298, *Naomi* 300, *Hecate* 318, *Pity* 312, and *Christ Appearing* 327. They were indeed part of the same group of prints: the monoprints Blake left unsigned and unsold at the end of his life. They once belonged to Catherine Blake and most were once part of Tatham's collection and part of Hogarth's 1842 “portfolio of Blake drawings.” The monoprints from the portfolio were dispersed through separate sales by Hogarth and Ruskin, with at least five acquired by a collector of modern art. Pease's five monoprints appear to have come together in an unknown collection by the 1870s, a collection that was possibly the source for Burgess and included the now untraced *Nebuchadnezzar* 304. There appears to have been no overlap between the monoprints of [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#).

Abbreviations:

BB:

G. E. Bentley, Jr. *Blake Books*. Clarendon Press, 1977.

BR2:

G. E. Bentley, Jr. *Blake Records*, 2nd edition. Yale University Press, 2004.

Butlin:

Martin Butlin. *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*. 2 vols. Yale University Press, 1981. “(Butlin #)” refers to the work’s catalogue number in vol. 1; “(Butlin p. #)” refers to a page number in vol. 1; titles of works followed by a number (e.g. *Newton* 307) refer to Butlin 307.

E:

David Erdman. *Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Commentary Harold Bloom. Rev. edn. New York: Doubleday, 1988.

Life:

Alexander Gilchrist. *Life of Blake: “Pictor Ignotus.”* Macmillan and Co., 2 vols., 1863.

“PB”

Joseph Viscomi. “Posthumous Blake: The Roles of Catherine Blake, C. H. Tatham, and Frederick Tatham in Blake’s Afterlife.” *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 3 (Winter 2019).

PP:

Joseph Viscomi. *William Blake’s Printed Paintings: Methods, Origins, Meanings*. Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. London: Yale University Press, 2021.

Sale Cat.:

G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Sale Catalogues of Blake’s Works: 1791–2016*. Blake Collection, E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria University Library, University of Toronto, http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/collections/special_collections/bentley_blake_collection/sale_catalogue

“Signing”:

Joseph Viscomi, “Signing Large Color Prints: The Significance of Blake’s Signatures,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 80, no. 3 (2017): 365–402.

Monoprints:

Christ Appearing:

Christ Appearing to the Apostles After the Resurrection

Elohim:

Elohim Creating Adam

Good and Evil Angels:

The Good and Evil Angels Struggling for Possession of a Child

Lamech:

Lamech and His Two Wives

Naomi:

Naomi Entreating Ruth and Orpah to Return to the Land of Moab

Satan:

Satan Exulting over Eve

Endnotes

1 See Dossie I (London, 1796): “Of the several methods of Painting in Water, as distinguished by the Colours, Vehicles, and Grounds, required for different purposes” (136); “Of the Colours to be used in the PAINTING WITH WATER COLOURS, or in MINIATURE; with the manner of Mixture, or Composition of them with the proper Vehicles” (136); “Of the Colours fit to be used in Distemper, or Painting with Size; and the manner of mixing or compounding them with the proper Vehicles” (141); “Of the Colours proper to be used in fresco Painting, and the mixture of them with the Water” (142); “Of the Nature, Preparation, and Use of the several Substances employed in Enamel Painting” (185). See also Massoul.

2 William Pyne described the destruction of the Guildhall frescos in *Microcosm of London* and blamed defective plaster rather than the painter or “the humidity in this country” (vol 2, print #40, Guildhall, 1 October 1808, 116). In 1807, James Malcolm, describing the deterioration of the *Accension*, scolded the artist for not realizing “that water-colours are not suited to our climate, which, abounding with damp, every wall covered by them must inevitably be the means of conveying the fluid into the very body of the paint, and finally cause a separation of the parts” (411).

3 See *The Golden Cabinet* (Dublin 1790): “. . . but the manner of working [in oil painting] is very different from that in fresco, or in water, by reason the oil does not dry near so fast, which gives the painter an opportunity of touching and re-touching all the parts of his figures as often as he pleases; which in the other methods of painting is a thing impracticable” (57).

4 Blake’s experimental pictures of Nelson, Pitt, and the Bard were also dark, indistinct, and overworked, which Blake acknowledged while still referring to them as frescos.

5 See Roget’s *A History of the ‘Old Watercolour’ Society*, Marjorie B. Cohn’s *Wash and Gouache*, and Greg Smith’s *The Emergence of the Professional Watercolourist: Contentions and Alliances in the Artistic Domain, 1760–1824*.

6 Dossie advised coating canvas in hot drying oils, red ochre, and finally “a coat of white lead and oil,” which, when dried, was to be polished with pumice stones (I 217). Blake identified this ground with oil painting “after Vandyke’s time” (E 531) and dismissed it, believing that “when its protecting oil is evaporated,” the white “will become lead again” (E 531).

7 For a discussion of Blake as a transitional artist, see Morris Eaves’ *William Blake’s Theory of Art*.

8 Watercolorists responded to their exclusion from the Royal Academy by creating their own societies and venues for exhibitions. They

could exhibit with the Society of Artists of Great Britain (1760–1791), the Free Society of Arts (1760–1783), and with the Royal Academy (1769–), but in these venues they were usually overpowered by the larger oil paintings, which were given privilege of place in the hangings. The Society of Painters in Water-Colours (from 1805) and the New Society of Painters in Miniature and Water-Colours, or the Associated Artists in Water-Colours (from 1807) were established to assist watercolorists in exhibiting their works. Blake was a member of the latter society and exhibited three frescos in 1812 (*BR2* 311).

9 *BR2* 688. John Linnell (1792–1882), Blake’s last patron (1818–1827), contested Tatham’s claims and believed Blake’s effects should have gone to Blake’s sister, Catherine. For an overview of the period between Blake’s and Mrs. Blake’s deaths and fight over Blake’s effects, see “PB” pars. 2–44, and *BR2*, 465–547.

10 “Annotated Catalogue” (*Life* II 262). Rossetti quotes from a “List of Works” that apparently accompanied the letter to Ferguson and was part of the now untraced documentation that Gilchrist referenced when describing Ferguson.

11 Tatham had referred to monographs as having been “printed in oil,” which is presumably why Anne Gilchrist referred to the technique as an “oil-printing process” (Anne Gilchrist 134–5). Dante Rossetti referred to them as “oil-colour printed and hand-finished designs” (*Life* I 375). Blake’s colors were water miscible, mixed with glues and gums, not oils (*PP* 18–20, 75–77).

12 “He is the son of an architect of some repute I fancy; and was himself originally a sculptor. He abandoned that early, and took to portraits in crayons by which he earned (chiefly in the Provinces I believe) a very sufficient income—but when the evil days (for this class of artist) of daguerreotype and photograph began, gradually lost all his practice: and has since been striving ineffectually, I fear, to succeed with Oil Painting” (A. Gilchrist 128–29).

13 Tatham Family History Genealogy, saxonlodge.net.

14 Helen Rossetti Angeli-Dennis Collection, University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections, Box 24–14.

15 William Odell Elwel owned *Songs* posthumous copy d by 1840 (*BB* 426).

16 Tatham was listed as living in Winchester for 1840 and 1841 in the Royal Academy’s exhibition catalogues.

17 Essick (“Marketplace” 2008) and Butlin (p. 157) identify the monographs on Ruskin’s list as *Newton* 307, *Satan* 292, *Nebuchadnezzar* 304, “the Horse” as either *Elijah/God Judging Adam* 295 or *Pity* 312, and the “the owls” as *Hecate* 318.

18 Hogarth apparently scaled back the business but stayed at 5 Haymarket until 1866, when he had another auction of surplus stock, with “Drawings by Blake, Stothard, and Flaxman, 6” (lot 424) selling for

£2.5.0.

19 The earliest provenance of *Christ Appearing* 326 (“?Mrs. Blake . . . Palser”) applies to *Christ Appearing* 327; the earliest provenance of 327 (“?Mrs. Blake . . . Sharp”) applies to 326 (“Signing” 402n50). Butlin suggests that Hogarth sold *Nebuchadnezzar* 304 and that this was the version that Ruskin examined in 1842. *Nebuchadnezzar* 304 appears to have been sold before Blake reprinted its matrix in 1805 (see *PP* 65), or possibly was one of the drawings sold to Ker in 1810 (see *PP* 212n3). Hogarth sold version 303, as Butlin also suggests (304), for £2.7.0 to Henry Graves, a printseller, who paid more than twice what the other monographs cost, which was the highest price to date for a monoprint. Butlin also records Proctor as purchasing *Nebuchadnezzar* for £10.10.0, but the British Library copy of Hogarth’s catalogue records Proctor as having acquired lot 7,555 (a sketch by Van Dyke) for £10.10.0.

20 *Satan Traversing* was bought in the 1853 Butts auction by J. C. Strange; Rossetti, in 1863, records *Satan* 291 as a tempera in the possession of “Mr. Strange, from Mr. Butts” (230 #179). If so, the sale has not been traced. The first reliable sale of *Satan* 291 was in the March 1904 Quaritch sale catalogue (*Sale Cat.*)

21 Ruskin tells the story of “the ten drawings which Turner did for love, in 1842” in the *Epilogue* to the 1878 Fine Arts Society catalogue of his collection.

22 Ruskin sold the Lucerne watercolor in the early 1870s for “A thousand pounds” to Mr. Vokins (Ruskin, *Turner* 482).

23 Burgess, though Ruskin’s friend, could not have acquired *Hecate* 318 from Ruskin pre-1855, since he was about eleven years old at the time and the two did not meet till 1860, when Ruskin hired him to engrave some illustrations. Ruskin thought Burgess’s monoprints were the same “drawings” he had seen in 1842, because he appears to have identified them as *drawings* and not as color prints existing in multiple versions. Burgess’s *Hecate* 318 was, indeed, the version in Hogarth’s portfolio, but Burgess’s version of *Nebuchadnezzar* was 304, not the version in the portfolio, which was 302 (the version sold in the 1862 auction) and printed with 304 in 1795.

24 Drafts of the letters to Scott and Colnaghi are in the National Art Library, FD 6.1, Victoria and Albert Museum. The Blake passages were first reproduced by Marcia Allentuck, who incorrectly transcribed the first recipient as “S. Scott” instead of John Scott, the nephew and future partner of Dominic Colnaghi (448).

25 Blake priced the last copies of *Songs* with either gold lead or shell gold in mind. In 1818, Blake priced *Songs* at £6.6.0 (E 771); in 1827, he priced it at £10.10.0 (E 784). In 1824, *Songs* copy U, printed c. 1818, was offered at Rivington’s and Cochran for £8.8; but this copy sold with the property of Thomas Edward at Stewart, Wheatley, & Adlard, 15 May 1828 for just £2.13 (*BB* 422).

26 Christie’s, 1 July 1828, lot 85. In the same auction, Flaxman’s much smaller portfolio of thirty-seven drawings from *Hesiod*, “handsomely bound in morocco, lettered, &c.,” sold for £210—seventy-five times more per drawing than Blake’s drawings. Flaxman’s outline engravings, of course, were famous throughout Europe, whereas Blake’s works were only fairly well known in London.

27 The watercolor illustrations of *Night Thoughts* are slightly smaller than the large color prints. They were offered for £300 at Winstanley’s, Manchester, in 1826, with a reserve of £52.10, which they did not make. They were offered again at Wheatley’s, London, in 1828, with a reserve of £52.10 and were again bought in (Butlin 330). Bentley notes, however, that “The Wheatley code, ‘Norris KBO/e’, indicates that the bids did not achieve the reserve of £157.10.0, according to Marc Vaulbert de Chantilly” (*Sale Cat.* n. 73).

28 The “Volume of Drawings by Blake, Illustrative of Blair’s *Grave*, entitled ‘Black Spirits and White, Blue Spirits and Grey’” sold as part of Thomas Sivright’s estate, by auction at Mr. C. B. Tait’s, February 1836, for £1.1.0. (William Blake Archive/ Illustrations to Robert Blair’s *The Grave*/ Copy Information).

29 Portions of the Butts’ Blake collection were auctioned at Sotheby’s on 26–27 March 1852 and 26 June 1852, and at Foster and Son on 29 June 1853 and 8 March 1854 (*Sale Cat.*).

30 Of the Webster design, Hogarth states: “This interesting and characteristic plate, the entire stock of which is in this Catalogue, will be destroyed at the time of sale” (p. 313, for lots 7352–7357). Hogarth notes the same destruction awaits the proofs after designs by Landseer, Wilkie, and many others.

31 Hogarth and his son published the portfolio *Works of the Sketching Society / Executed in Photography / by / J. Hogarth Junr.* (London, 1858). This was comprised of two dozen or more colored photomechanical reproductions mounted in imitation of intaglio prints.

32 *Lamech* 298 and its original frame are in the collection of Robert N. Essick. The frame—identical in style and size to *Naomi* 300’s frame—is mid-nineteenth century and, while not the popular “Hogarth frame,” which is black and gilt, it appears to be one of the variety of frames that Hogarth used to frame prints and drawings. Unfortunately, no markings on the frame dates or identifies its maker.

33 Eight monoprints were varnished, apparently in the mid-nineteenth century (Butlin p. 156). Mistaking monoprints for oil paintings or as being printed in oils, as Tatham and others had, easily leads to varnishing them in preparation for display. The eight monoprints were not varnished by or for the same collector. The five owned by Pease, for example, were similarly varnished and may have been acquired in that condition, possibly from Burgess, a professional artist who would have known how to apply varnish properly.

34 The eighteen impressions of lots 191–94 were described as being

from “published works, highly finished in colors.” The latter phrase and its variants were used to describe the five large color printed drawings—or monoprints. The eighteen impressions were color printed designs from illuminated books that made up the *Small Book of Designs* copy B.

35 Rossetti notes in 1864 that the bookseller Francis Harvey has some Blake works, “varying from important water-colours to slight scraps: one of his tolerably recent catalogues specifies thirty-three of the latter sort, to be had in a lump for £1.16” (*Selected Letters* 134). The important watercolors were probably those Harvey acquired at the 1862 Sotheby auction: *Witch of Endor*, *Age Teaching Youth*, and *Lucifer and the Pope in Hell* (Butlin 144, 91, 287). The “scraps” comprised fifteen and eighteen rough sketches from lots 200 and 201 of the same auction, which he bought for two and three shillings respectively.

36 Transcribed from the original letter in the Soane Museum. See also BR2 552.

37 Smith owned excellent collections of the works of Blake’s contemporaries Bewick and Rowlandson, illustrated books, and books of prints. Smith also collected “scrap books”; among his collection, sold at Christie’s on 16 July 1880, was a “scrap-book, containing lithograph landscapes book plates, after J. M. W. Turner, R. A., etchings, by P. Sandby, etc” (lot 46); “Scrap-book, with sketches of figures, by De Wilde” (lot 49); “Architectural drawings, etc. in a folio; and 4 scrap books” (lot 47); “scrap-books, large and small, one with etchings by Sandby, another with portraits of artists, after Vandyck, views of London, cathedrals, etc, by W. Hollar” (lot 13); “seven scrap books” (lot 127); and many miscellaneous sets of engravings and etchings.

38 Rossetti used sales catalogues to check and develop his *Catalogue*. The absence from his lists of many of the works purchased at the 1862 Sotheby auction reveals he was unaware of the auction. For example, he did not mention the painter Rowbotham or any of the seventy-five drawings and sketches that he purchased in lots 158, 163, 169, 177, 198, 192, 193, and 202 (which included Butlin 103, 609, 628, 227, 140, 124, and 66).

39 Most of the buyers at the 1852, 1853, and 1854 auctions of Butts and Hogarth were other sellers appearing to buy for stock, not collectors. The supply provided by the Butts auctions did not stimulate demand or increase evaluations.

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