

Introduction: Joseph Johnson and William Blake

Joseph Johnson (1738-1809), who provided many engraving commissions to Blake during the 1780s and 1790s, was one of the most prominent and respected publishers in London during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. John Aikin (1747-1822), one of Johnson's authors and a longstanding friend, remarked in his obituary that Johnson was 'for some years past considered as the Father of the Trade'.¹ Notwithstanding Johnson's professional stature, he has often been better remembered for his association with the well-known authors he befriended than for his achievements, in his own right, as a publisher. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, Johnson himself finally received a great deal of scholarly attention.² The value of the findings of Leslie Chard and Gerald Tyson in particular will be evident from my frequent references to their scholarship.³

Perhaps the primary reason that Johnson deserves to be remembered in his own right is the formation of the 'Johnson circle',⁴ a consequence of his professional as well as social activities. As Aikin remarked,

It is well known that Mr. Johnson's literary connexions have lain in great part among the free Enquirers both on religious and political topicks. He was himself, on conviction, a

¹ [John] Aikin, 'Biographical Account of the late Mr. Joseph Johnson', *The Gentleman's Magazine* 79 (1809), 1167.

² See Phyllis G. Mann, 'Death of a London Bookseller', *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin* 15 (1964), 8-12; Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York and London, 1974), 66-82; Leslie F. Chard, II, 'Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 79 (1975), 51-82; id., 'Bookseller to Publisher: Joseph Johnson and the English Book Trade, 1760 to 1810', *The Library* 5th Series, 32 (1977), 138-54; Jane Worthington Smyser, 'The Trial and Imprisonment of Joseph Johnson, Bookseller', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 77 (1974), 418-35; Gerald P. Tyson, 'Joseph Johnson, an Eighteenth-Century Bookseller', *Studies in Bibliography* 28 (1975), 1-16; and id., *Joseph Johnson: A Liberal Publisher* (Iowa City, 1979).

³ More recent scholarship focusing on Johnson includes: Claire Tomalin, 'Publisher in prison: Joseph Johnson and the book trade', *The Times Literary Supplement* (2 December 1994), 15-16; Leslie F. Chard, II, 'Joseph Johnson in the 1790s', *The Wordsworth Circle* 33 (2002), 95-100; and Helen Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent: Joseph Johnson and the Cause of Liberty* (Basingstoke and New York, 2003).

⁴ For the development of the Johnson circle, see Chard, 'Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade', 61-62, and Tyson, 66, 68 and 118-22.

friend to such large and liberal discussion as is not inconsistent with the peace and welfare of Society, and the preservation of due decorum towards things really respectable.⁵

Over the years, the Johnson circle included a number of authors, such as Aikin, his sister Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825), Joel Barlow (1754-1812), John Bonnycastle (1750?-1821), Thomas Christie (1761-96), William Cowper (1731-1800), Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), George Dyer (1755-1841), William Frenn (1757-1841), Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), Alexander Geddes (1737-1802), William Godwin (1756-1836),⁶ Thomas Holcroft (1745-1809), Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808), Thomas Paine (1737-1809), Richard Price (1723-91), Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), John Horne Tooke (1736-1812), Gilbert Wakefield (1756-1801) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97). Some members of the circle (such as Godwin and Price) were infrequently or never published by Johnson. Therefore, a second criterion for inclusion in the circle is having been a guest at Johnson's legendary Tuesday dinners, held in a room above the shop. Chard describes 72, St Paul's Churchyard as 'the site of some of the most important and interesting literary exchanges of the period',⁷ and it is obvious that Johnson's high standing and success as a publisher derived from the intersection of his professional and social interests and the consequent development of his circle.

Although they were never members of the Johnson circle, I should like to note the probable influence of Robert Lowth (1710-87)⁸ and the French philosopher and politician Constantin-François de Chassebœuf, Comte de Volney (1757-1820), upon

⁵ Aikin, 'Biographical Account of the late Mr. Joseph Johnson', 1167.

⁶ As Beth Lau observes, 'Godwin was one of the rare individuals in Johnson's inner circle who was not one of Johnson's authors. Aside from the *Memoirs* and *Posthumous Works* of Mary Wollstonecraft, the only work of Godwin's that Johnson published was the 1795 pamphlet, *Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills*' ('William Godwin and the Joseph Johnson Circle: The Evidence of the Diaries', *The Wordsworth Circle* 33 [2002], 105; underlining not in original).

⁷ Chard, 'Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade', 51.

⁸ Stephen Prickett takes for granted Blake's familiarity with Lowth's ideas. See *Words and The Word: Language, poetics and biblical interpretation* (Cambridge, 1986), 116-17, 202 and 228.

Blake's work during the period 1790-95. Lowth was Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford from 1741 to 1752, a Bishop of the Church of England, and the author of *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) and *Isaiah: A New Translation* (1778). However, Lowth's most celebrated work was *De Sacra Poesi Hebræorum Prælectiones Academicæ* (1753). Johnson published the first English edition, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1787), which was translated by George Gregory (1754-1808). Although Blake produced no engravings to illustrate Johnson's edition (the frontispiece portrait of Lowth was engraved by John Keyse Sherwin [1751-90]), my discussions of sublimity in Chapter 4 and prophecy in Chapter 5 suggest the extensive and continuing influence of this significant Johnson publication upon Blake's work. In 1792, Johnson would also publish the first English translation of Volney's highly influential essay on history and religion, *Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les Révolutions des Empires* (1791), which I discuss in connection with Blake's work in Chapters 2 and 6.

Enlarging upon a hint in Frederick Tatham's manuscript 'Life of Blake' (c. 1832),⁹ the Victorian biographer Alexander Gilchrist (1828-61) describes Blake as a member of the Johnson circle, 'one of the set':¹⁰

In Johnson's shop [...] Blake was, at this date [1791], in the habit of meeting a remarkable coterie. The bookseller gave, moreover, plain but hospitable weekly dinners at his house, No. 72, St. Paul's Churchyard, in a little quaintly-shaped upstairs-room, with walls not at right angles [...]. Hither came Drs. Price and Priestley, and occasionally Blake; hither friendly, irascible Fuseli; hither precise doctrinaire Godwin [...]. Here, too, he met formal stoical Holcroft [...]. Here hard-headed Tom Paine, 'the rebellious needleman;' Mary Wollstonecraft also [...]. These and others of very 'advanced' political and religious opinions, theoretic republicans and revolutionists, were of the circle.¹¹

⁹ *BR*, 685 ('He was intimate with a great many of the most learned & eminent men of his time, whom he generally met at Johnsons, the Bookseller of S^t. Pauls Church Yard').

¹⁰ *Gilchrist*, i. 93.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

Later, I question the nature and extent of Blake's involvement with this impressive group of 'learned & eminent' authors. But even if Blake did not attend Johnson's dinners and his association with the Johnson circle was merely casual and infrequent, it would have given him direct exposure to some of the most significant progressive thought of the period. Also, as Mee observes, 'Johnson's shop, which Blake attended in the way of business, would itself have been a place of sociability and conversation, sufficiently, anyway, to have given him a sense of the nature of intellectual debate [at Johnson's dinners]'.¹²

Although I refer to several obscure figures associated with or published by Johnson, I should note the special importance for my study of three celebrated members of the Johnson circle: Fuseli, Wollstonecraft and Priestley. Fuseli was a painter, art theorist, translator, *Analytical* reviewer, Royal Academician and wit, and had been friends with Johnson since 1764.¹³ In Chapter 2, I briefly discuss Fuseli in connection with Blake's work, but the primary importance of Fuseli is his having 'introduced' Blake to the Johnson circle around 1787.¹⁴ (Blake had already produced plates for Johnson in 1780 and 1782-83,¹⁵ but what might be termed Blake's 'introduction' to the circle probably did not take place until after he met Fuseli in 1787.) Coincidentally, Wollstonecraft's association with Johnson also began around 1787.¹⁶ In addition to being well-known for her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft became an active member of the Johnson circle, producing educational works, novels, children's books, translations for Johnson and

¹² Jon Mee, '“A Little Less Conversation, A Little More Action”: Mutuality, Converse and Mental Fight', in Haggarty and Mee (eds), *Blake and Conflict* (Basingstoke and London, 2009), 133.

¹³ Chard, 'Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade', 56; *Tyson*, 13-14.

¹⁴ See *Essick*, 190; *Stranger*, 108-11; and *BR*, 54-56.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 813-15.

¹⁶ See Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 66, 68 and 302, and Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life* (New York, 2000), 152.

numerous reviews for the *Analytical*.¹⁷ Priestley, who was known as a theologian, natural philosopher, educational and political theorist, and Dissenting clergyman, is clearly the most important member of the Johnson circle, both in terms of the intellectual history of the eighteenth century and for his influence upon Blake. Johnson and Priestley became friends in 1765¹⁸ and Johnson would eventually publish more than 130 titles by Priestley.¹⁹ I discuss Priestley in every chapter of this thesis as well as my Conclusion, and his extensive writings and lengthy career afford numerous points of comparison with Blake's productions from the period 1790-95.

CLASSES OF LITERATURE PUBLISHED BY JOHNSON

Like his circle of friends, authors and associates, Johnson's catalogue of publications represents a remarkable variety of disciplines. As Aikin observed,

the majority of his publications were of the theological and political class, yet the number of those in science and elegant literature was by no means inconsiderable. Besides all the scientific writings of Dr. Priestley, he published many important works in Medicine and Anatomy; and others in different branches of knowledge. Two Poets of great modern celebrity were by him first introduced to the Publick—Cowper and Darwin.²⁰

As noted above, the works of Priestley represent a significant portion of Johnson's output during his career as publisher. Johnson also published theological works and tracts concerning theological controversies, standard titles of English literature,²¹ medical texts and two medical journals,²² political writings, natural philosophy and science,²³ Unitarian texts²⁴ (and works attacking Unitarianism),²⁵ pamphlets advocating

¹⁷ According to Ralph Wardle, Wollstonecraft contributed more than 300 reviews during the period 1788-91 ('Mary Wollstonecraft, *Analytical Reviewer*', *PMLA* 62 [1947], 1003 n. 12).

¹⁸ *Tyson*, 16.

¹⁹ Chard, 'Bookseller to Publisher', 140.

²⁰ Aikin, 'Biographical Account of the late Mr. Joseph Johnson', 1168.

²¹ Chard, 'Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade', 61; id., 'Bookseller to Publisher', 149.

²² Id., 'Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade', 55, 57 and 60; *Tyson*, 15-16, 45-49, 76-80 and 106-09.

²³ Chard, 'Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade', 60; *Tyson*, 73-75.

²⁴ Chard, 'Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade', 59 and 66; id., 'Bookseller to Publisher', 139;

a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts,²⁶ books for young readers,²⁷ and works concerning education.²⁸ Chard estimates that Johnson published ‘some 2,700 imprints in the forty-eight active years of his career’ and that ‘[h]is largest category by subject was religion (1,067 titles), followed successively by literature (350), medicine (300), politics (175), and science (125)’.²⁹ The wide variety of disciplines represented by Johnson’s publications and the fact that Blake received numerous engraving commissions from Johnson suggest the possibility of meaningful connections between Blake’s productions from the period 1790-95 and works appearing under Johnson’s imprint, particularly in the fields of theology (as I discuss in Chapters 1 and 6), biblical criticism (Chapters 5 and 6), natural philosophy and medicine (Chapters 1, 2 and 6), and politics (Chapters 2, 3 and 4).

THE ANALYTICAL REVIEW

Johnson’s other major achievement was *The Analytical Review* (1788-98),³⁰ founded in partnership with Christie, who apparently served as co-editor. Chard believes that ‘[t]he majority of the reviews were written by Christie, Fuseli, Geddes [...] and Mary Wollstonecraft’ and he describes the *Analytical* as ‘never particularly strident and certainly not radical’.³¹ However, it is apparent that the *Analytical* itself (above and beyond Johnson’s radical associations and publications) led to Johnson’s being identified

Tyson, 38-39, 44-45, 69-70, 72-73 and 147.

²⁵ Chard, ‘Bookseller to Publisher’, 140.

²⁶ Id., ‘Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade’, 66; *Tyson*, 39-41 and 93-95.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 80-82.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 82-84.

²⁹ Chard, ‘Bookseller to Publisher’, 140.

³⁰ For brief histories of the *Analytical*, see *Roper*, 22-23, and *Tyson*, 95-106, 154-55 and 166-69. Under Johnson, the *Analytical* ran for 133 numbers. Beginning in January 1799, a new series of the *Analytical* was published by Thomas Hurst of Paternoster Row but publication ceased after the June 1799 number.

³¹ Chard, ‘Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade’, 67.

with radicalism by his contemporaries. Derek Roper³² and Brian Rigby³³ both consider the *Analytical* the most radical English review of the 1790s. Although their identities were unknown to most contemporaries (because most reviews are signed with pseudonymous initials), Rigby notes that reviewers for the *Analytical* ‘represented an important body of radical intellectuals active throughout the 1790s’³⁴ and that they were ‘deeply involved in liberal and radical causes, and not least in the campaign of Dissenters to have the Test and Corporation Acts repealed’.³⁵ Perhaps the strongest evidence of the association of Johnson and the *Analytical* with radicalism was the introduction of a copy of the September 1798 number into evidence by the prosecution at Johnson’s trial.³⁶

Because I refer frequently to the *Analytical* in the following chapters, it is useful to comment briefly on Blake’s references to contemporary reviews and his reading habits. I should first point out that Blake makes no direct references to the *Analytical* and it is unlikely that he was a subscriber. However, it is possible that Blake was familiar with journals such as the *Analytical* through his relationship with Johnson (*i.e.*, Blake may have borrowed copies of various journals from Johnson’s shop or read them there). In addition to such direct exposure to the *Analytical*, I believe that Blake obtained information through social and professional contact with the *Analytical* reviewers and other members of the Johnson circle. Finally, it is likely that Blake obtained information through reading the very texts to which I compare his work in the

³² See Roper, 22 and 178.

³³ See Brian Rigby, ‘Radical Spectators of the Revolution: the Case of the *Analytical Review*’, in Crossley and Small (eds), *The French Revolution and British Culture* (Oxford and New York, 1989), 63, and *id.*, ‘The French Revolution and English Literary Radicals: the Case of the *Analytical Review*’, in Mason and Doyle (eds), *The Impact of the French Revolution on European Consciousness* (Gloucester, 1989), 91.

³⁴ Rigby, ‘Radical Spectators of the Revolution’, 64.

³⁵ *Id.*, ‘The French Revolution and English Literary Radicals’, 91.

³⁶ Smyser, ‘The Trial and Imprisonment of Joseph Johnson, Bookseller’, 429-30.

following chapters, and I often cite *Analytical* reviews of those texts. While I do not claim that there are any clear indirect references to the *Analytical* in Blake's productions of 1790-95, my aim in citing such reviews from the *Analytical* is to demonstrate the frequent coincidence of ideas, imagery and language in works reviewed there and in Blake's works.

As for Blake's reading habits, we have evidence that he was familiar with contemporary reviews such as *Bell's Weekly Messenger* (1796-1896), *The Monthly Magazine* (1796-1843)³⁷ and *The Examiner* (1808-81). For example, in a letter to George Cumberland (1754-1848) of September 1800 Blake states that he has 'given a sketch of your Proposal to the Editor of the Monthly Magazine desiring that he will give it to the Public'.³⁸ Blake's letter to the editor of *The Monthly Magazine* defending Fuseli's *Ugolino and His Sons Starving to Death in the Tower* was published on 1 July 1806 and suggests his familiarity with *Bell's Weekly Messenger* as well as *The Monthly Magazine*:

My indignation was exceedingly moved at reading a criticism in Bell's Weekly Messenger (25th May) on the picture of Count Ugolino, by Mr. Fuseli [...]; and your Magazine being as extensive in its circulation as that Paper, as it also must from its nature be more permanent, I take the advantageous opportunity to counteract the widely-diffused malice which has for many years, under the pretence of admiration of the arts, been assiduously sown and planted among the English public against true art, such as it existed in the days of Michael Angelo and Raphael.

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Blake also obviously read the attack by Robert Hunt in *The Examiner* on the designs for *The Grave*,³⁹ as indicated by comments in *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1809).⁴⁰

³⁷ Johnson was involved in the founding of *The Monthly Magazine* in 1796. See Chard, 'Joseph Johnson: Father of the Book Trade', 67; Marilyn Butler, 'Culture's medium: the role of the review', in Curran (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* (Cambridge, 1993), 126; and Chard, 'Joseph Johnson in the 1790s', 95.

³⁸ Robert N. Essick and Morton D. Paley, '“Dear Generous Cumberland”: A Newly Discovered Letter and Poem by William Blake', *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 32 (1998), 4.

³⁹ *BR*, 258-61.

⁴⁰ See E 537-38 and 541-42. Without doubt, Blake also knew of Hunt's later attack in *The Examiner* on the 1809 exhibition (see *BR*, 282-85).

Presumably, Blake was aware of other review articles mentioning him or his engravings in works such as John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition, Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796),⁴¹ *Designs to a Series of Ballads, Written by William Hayley, with the Ballads Annexed* (1802),⁴² Prince Hoare's *Academic Correspondence* (1804),⁴³ Hayley's *Ballads, Founded on Anecdotes Relating to Animals, with Prints by W. Blake* (1805),⁴⁴ Benjamin Heath Malkin's *A Father's Memoirs of His Child* (1806)⁴⁵ and Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1808).⁴⁶

I acknowledge that questions may remain as to whether Blake actually read the *Analytical* and other publications that I adduce to demonstrate his concern with topics addressed by Johnson's authors. Blake also seems unlike the typical reader of reviews in the 1790s described by Roper.⁴⁷ However, Blake's polymathic interests and lengthy professional association with Johnson – in addition to the many instances of shared imagery, language and themes in Blake's works and Johnson's publications – increase the likelihood that Blake had some level of familiarity with such materials. Also, the broad referentiality of Blake's works finds a companionable form in the 'encyclopedic' character of contemporary reviews, particularly the *Analytical*.⁴⁸ Given the foregoing, we might tentatively accept David Weir's view that '[t]he sentiments expressed in the *Analytical Review* [...] can be read as an approximation of Blake's radical attitudes,

⁴¹ *BR*, 817 (*The London Review*).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 143 (*The European Magazine*).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 190 (*The Literary Journal*).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 220 (*The Eclectic Review*) and 223-24 (*The Annual Review*).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 229-30 (*The Literary Journal*), 230 (*The British Critic*), 231 (*The Monthly Review*), 232 (*The Annual Review* and *The Monthly Magazine*).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 265-74 (*The Antijacobin Review*) and 276 (*The Monthly Magazine*).

⁴⁷ See *Roper*, 24-25 and 172-73.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 36-38; Rigby, 'Radical Spectators of the Revolution', 64; and *id.*, 'The French Revolution and English Literary Radicals', 93.

albeit conveyed in a different register'⁴⁹ – with the proviso that the *Analytical* would also have provided Blake with a substantial amount of information of a non-political nature.

‘BLAKE THE ENGRAVER’

Johnson provided numerous engraving commissions to Blake during the 1780s and 1790s. The following table lists plates engraved by Blake for Johnson between 1780 and 1797, illustrating their longstanding professional relationship.⁵⁰

TABLE 1

Year ⁵¹	Book ⁵²	Number of plates
1780	William Enfield, <i>The Speaker</i> (1780-97)	1
1782	John Bonnycastle, <i>An Introduction to Mensuration</i> (1782-94)	1
1782	William Nicholson, <i>An Introduction to Natural Philosophy</i> (1782, 1787)	1
1782	<i>The Ladies New and Polite Pocket Memorandum-Book</i> (1782)	1
1783	Thomas Henry, <i>Memoirs of Albert de Haller</i> (1783)	1
1783	Joseph Ritson (ed.), <i>A Select Collection of English Songs</i> (1783)	1
1788	Johann Caspar Lavater, <i>Aphorisms on Man</i> , tr. [Henry Fuseli] (1788-94)	1
1790	Christian Gotthilf Salzmann, <i>Elements of Morality</i> , tr. [Mary Wollstonecraft] (1791-1815)	27
1791	David Hartley, <i>Observations on Man</i> (1791)	1
1791	Salzmann, <i>Elements of Morality</i> (1791-1815)	17
1791	Mary Wollstonecraft, <i>Original Stories from Real Life</i> (1791, 1796)	6
1791	[Erasmus Darwin], <i>The Botanic Garden</i> (1791-1806)	10
1792	John Gabriel Stedman, <i>Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition, Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam</i> (1796-1813)	4
1793	James Earle, <i>Practical Observations on the Operation for the Stone</i> (1793-1803)	2 ⁵³

⁴⁹ David Weir, *Brahma in the West: William Blake and the Oriental Renaissance* (Albany, 2003), 30-31.

⁵⁰ My table derives from *BR*, 813-19.

⁵¹ The year is that on the print itself.

⁵² The year following the title is that on the title-page of the book. Multiple years or ranges of years indicate various editions in which Blake's plates appeared.

⁵³ Blake may have produced a third engraving for *Practical Observations on the Operation for the Stone*, but Bentley lists only two in his table in *Blake Records*. See Leslie F. Chard, II, 'Two "New" Blake Engravings: Blake, James Earle, and the Surgeon's Art', *Blake Studies* 6 (1975), 153-56.

1793	Stedman, <i>Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition</i> (1796-1813)	12
1795	<i>The Poems of Caius Valerius Catullus, in English Verse</i> , tr. [John Nott] (1795)	2
1795	John Brown (tr.), <i>The Elements of Medicine</i> (1795)	1
1795	[Darwin], <i>The Botanic Garden</i> (1795)	1
1797	Leonhard Euler, <i>Elements of Algebra</i> , tr. [Francis Horner] (1797, 1810)	1
1797	Charles Allen, <i>A new and Improved History of England</i> (1798)	4
1797	Allen, <i>A New and Improved Roman History</i> (1798)	4

It should be noted that the greatest concentration of Blake's engraving work for Johnson (82 or 83 plates published between 1790 and 1795) coincides with the period covered by this thesis. Though my table ends at 1797, Blake continued to produce engravings for Johnson (albeit with diminishing frequency) until 1804.⁵⁴

Mee points out that 'in the relatively few references to Blake available to us from contemporary sources he is referred to as "Blake the Engraver"'.⁵⁵ While most of these references belong to the period of Blake's residence in Felpham (from September 1800 until September 1803),⁵⁶ Bentley provides other examples of Blake's contemporaries describing him in terms of his profession during the 1780s and 1790s.⁵⁷ By the end of his life, as shown by obituaries and biographical notices of Blake published between August 1827 and December 1828,⁵⁸ he was known to his contemporaries primarily as the illustrator of *The Grave* and as an engraver.

⁵⁴ See *BR*, 820.

⁵⁵ *Mee*, 221.

⁵⁶ See, for example, *BR*, 93, 94-95, 103, 104, 107, 108, 115, 122, 125-26, 145, 147 and 170-71.

⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, 31 (Flaxman writing to Hayley in 1784), 75 (Cumberland's Appendix to *Thoughts on Outline* [1796]), 80 (Cumberland writing to Horne Tooke in 1798) and 81 (a diary entry by Charles Townley in 1799).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 465-66 (*Literary Gazette*, August 1827), 471-72 (*The Monthly Magazine*, October 1827), 473-74 (*The Gentleman's Magazine*, November 1827), 477 (*The New Monthly Magazine*, December 1827), 479 (*The Annual Biography and Obituary for the Year 1828*, January 1828) and 491 (*The Eclectic Review*, December 1828). The obituary appearing in *The Literary Chronicle* (September 1827) is unique in not describing Blake as an engraver (*ibid.*, 468-70).

I should briefly comment on the professional status of engraving in the period as well as the style of engraving Blake learned during his apprenticeship, from 1772 until 1779, under James Basire (1730-1802). Although there are contemporary descriptions of engraving as a respectable⁵⁹ and useful⁶⁰ art, perhaps the clearest indicator of its contemporary standing is the controversial exclusion of engravers from Academician status at the Royal Academy from the time of its foundation.⁶¹ Detlef Dörrbecker notes that the ‘Instrument of Foundation’ for the Royal Academy ‘isolat[es...] the art of engraving from the so-called arts of “invention” ’ and defines the term ‘artist’ ‘as applying exclusively to the professions of the painter, sculptor or architect’.⁶² In 1770, the Academy created a new class of member, the Associate Engraver, but this class was limited to six engravers who were not accorded full status.⁶³ Engravers would not be admitted to the Royal Academy with full Academician status until 1928.⁶⁴

In addition to this institutional attempt to discredit engraving in the period, the style of engraving Blake learned from Basire – described by Gilchrist as ‘dry, hard, monotonous, but painstaking [...] the lingering representative of a school already getting

⁵⁹ Cf. R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman. Being an Historical Account of All the TRADES, PROFESSIONS, ARTS, both Liberal and Mechanic, now practised in the Cities of London and Westminster*, 3rd edn (London, 1757), 114: ‘The several Branches of Engraving are very profitable, and are reckon’d among the genteel Trades’.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Abstract of the Rules, Orders, and Regulations, of the Society of Engravers, established 1802, under the immediate patronage of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales* (London, 1804), 4-5: ‘Amongst the Fine Arts [...], there is none which holds a more distinguished place, none which is more generally applicable to the purposes of science, than ENGRAVING, whether it be considered as a distinct art, or an auxiliary to the other Arts and Sciences.’

⁶¹ See Robert Strange, *An Inquiry into the Rise and Establishment of the Royal Academy of Arts. To which is prefixed, A Letter to the Earl of Bute* (London, 1775), iv-v, 112-14 and 123-25; Celina Fox, ‘The Engravers’ Battle for Professional Recognition in Early Nineteenth Century London’, *London Journal* 2 (1976), 4; and Sidney C. Hutchison, *The History of the Royal Academy, 1768-1986* (London, 1986), 26 and 35.

⁶² D.W. Dörrbecker, ‘Innovative Reproduction: Painters and Engravers at the Royal Academy of Arts’, in Clark and Worrall (eds), *Historicizing Blake* (Basingstoke and London, 1994), 129.

⁶³ See Hutchison, *The History of the Royal Academy*, 35-36 and 42, and Aileen Ward, ‘“S^r Joshua and His Gang”: William Blake and the Royal Academy’, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 52 (1989), 78.

⁶⁴ Hutchison, *The History of the Royal Academy*, 152.

old-fashioned'⁶⁵ – was at odds with the growing contemporary taste for tonal engraving processes exemplified by the work of Francesco Bartolozzi (1727-1815). Although many connoisseurs preferred the style of 'dry, hard' line engraving Blake learned during his apprenticeship,⁶⁶ print dealers such as John Boydell (1719-1804) helped to popularize tonal processes such as aquatint, mezzotint and stipple,⁶⁷ in part because plates produced using these methods were far less costly and time-consuming than plates produced in the style of pure line engraving.⁶⁸ In his manuscript 'Memorials of engravers', the printseller, auctioneer and historian of engraving Thomas Dodd (1771-1850) condemned stipple engraving as a 'prostituted art' that was fostered by a 'corrupt and vitiated taste' and would lead to the destruction of the 'legitimate art of Engraving'.⁶⁹ Years later, in his 'Public Address' (c. 1810), Blake would explicitly equate the popular engravers he associated with tonal processes (namely, Bartolozzi, Robert Strange [1721-92] and William Woollett [1735-85])⁷⁰ with the 'blotting and blurring' (E 528) he criticizes in painters 'of the latter Schools of Italy and Flanders' (E 530).⁷¹ Blake was not simply expressing an aesthetic preference for line engraving in his

⁶⁵ *Gilchrist*, i. 14.

⁶⁶ Cf. Edward Forster, *The British Gallery of Engravings, from Pictures of the Italian, French, Flemish, Dutch, and English Schools, now in the possession of the King, and the noblemen and gentlemen of the United Kingdoms* (London, 1807), 13: 'a style of engraving has been frequently practised of late years in England, called the CHALK or DOTTED STYLE. This mode has been employed [...] when early publication, or cheapness, was required, from the ease and rapidity with which it is executed; but it is a mode so decidedly inferior to that of the LINE engraving, that few collectors even admit it to their cabinets; and indeed, no Engraver of any celebrity ever used, or practised, it from choice, as the infinite superiority of the line is well known to them.' Also see Morris Eaves, *The Counter-Arts Conspiracy: Art and Industry in the Age of Blake* (Ithaca and London, 1992), 155 and 219-24.

⁶⁷ See Sven H.A. Bruntjen, *John Boydell, 1719-1804: A Study of Art Patronage and Publishing in Georgian London* (New York and London, 1985), 30 and 166-67.

⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, 106, 114 and 167.

⁶⁹ Quoted in C.S. Matheson, 'The Respective Functions of Text and Design in the Art of William Blake', D.Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 1990), 45.

⁷⁰ Boydell profited handsomely from the publication of plates by Bartolozzi and Woollett. See Eaves, *The Counter-Arts Conspiracy*, 33-34, 57 and 226.

⁷¹ 'I do not pretend to Paint better than Rafael or Mch Anglo <or Julio Romano or Alb Durer> but I do Pretend to Paint finer than Rubens or Remb¹ or Correggio or Titian. I do not Pretend to Engrave finer than Alb Durer Goltzius Sadeler or Edelinck but I do pretend to Engrave finer than Strange Woollett Hall or Bartolozzi <& All> because I understand Drawing which they understand not' (E 574). Also see Robert

‘Public Address’ but also lamenting the shift in public taste away from the pure technique in which he was trained and the effects of that shift on his employment. Blake states that ‘Resentment for Personal Injuries has had some share in this Public Address’ (E 574) and we might read this comment in terms of his disappointing dealings with Robert Hartley Cromek (1770-1812) as well as the decline of his career as a commercial engraver after the 1790s. Blake’s letter to Cumberland in August 1799 makes the point clearly:

as to Engraving in which art I cannot reproach myself with any neglect yet I am laid by in a corner as if I did not Exist & Since my Youngs Night Thoughts have been publishd Even Johnson and Fuseli have discarded my Graver.

(E 704)

It is against this background of the exclusion of engravers from the Royal Academy, the commercial shift towards tonal engraving processes, and Blake’s own diminishing fortunes as a reproductive engraver that we might partially account for his marginal position in the Johnson circle during the 1790s.

FOUR BLAKE TEXTS

As the present study contemplates Blake’s desire to be recognized as an author in the 1790s in terms of his incorporation of ideas from and responses to the writings of the Johnson circle, it is useful to consider Blake’s earlier manuscript *An Island in the Moon* (c. 1782-85), which, as Michael Phillips suggests, ‘satirically reflect[s] Blake’s professional, social, and domestic milieu at that time’.⁷² Following the earlier account of

N. Essick, ‘Blake and the Traditions of Reproductive Engraving’, *Blake Studies* 5 (1972), 71-72, and Eaves, *The Counter-Arts Conspiracy*, 108, 155-57 and 232-33.

⁷² William Blake, *An Island in the Moon*, facs. edn, ed. Michael Phillips (Cambridge, 1987), 4. On the basis of ‘topical reference and allusion, together with the presence near the end of three prospective *Songs [of Innocence]* followed by discussion of “Illuminating the Manuscript”’, Phillips suggests that *An Island in the Moon* ‘may have been composed intermittently between 1782 and 1785, or perhaps even later’ (ibid., 6).

Blake's contemporary, John Thomas Smith (1766-1833),⁷³ Gilchrist described Blake's introduction by John Flaxman (1755-1826) to the bluestocking salon of the Reverend Anthony Stephen Mathew (1733-1824) and his wife Harriet at 27 Rathbone Place in the early 1780s.⁷⁴ Blake's association with the Mathew circle was supposed by many scholars to have provided originals for his satirical portraits and the topical content in *An Island in the Moon*.⁷⁵ Notwithstanding the difficulty of establishing its context, originals and sources, *An Island in the Moon* shows Blake responding to his immediate social milieu and incorporating matters of topical interest, much as he appears to have done in his works of 1790-95 with respect to the Johnson circle. It is obvious, of course, that Blake was something of a protégé of the Mathew circle, which is quite different from his association with the Johnson circle as a professional copy engraver, yet I find the broad similarities between the Mathew and Johnson circles instructive.

I should also like to introduce two works dating from the 1790s: *The French Revolution* (1791) and *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* (1793). These two works complicate the question of Blake's relationship with the Johnson circle because the imprints on the sole copy (A) of *The French Revolution* (a set of uncorrected proof sheets) and *The Gates of Paradise* (copies B-E) name Johnson as publisher and co-publisher, respectively.⁷⁶ *The French Revolution* apparently did not evolve beyond the proof stage and the final six books are not extant even though it is announced as 'A Poem, in Seven Books'. As Mee proposes, the decision not to publish the poem may relate to Blake's enthusiastic style, which would have made him an 'ambiguous ally' in

⁷³ *BR*, 29-30.

⁷⁴ See *Gilchrist*, i. 43-50.

⁷⁵ See, for example, *Erdman*, 92-113. Phillips provides an excellent survey of possible contemporary and topical referents in *An Island in the Moon*, 6-21.

⁷⁶ See illustrations 1-3 on pp. 17-19.

the cause of reasonable radicalism pursued by most of Johnson's authors.⁷⁷

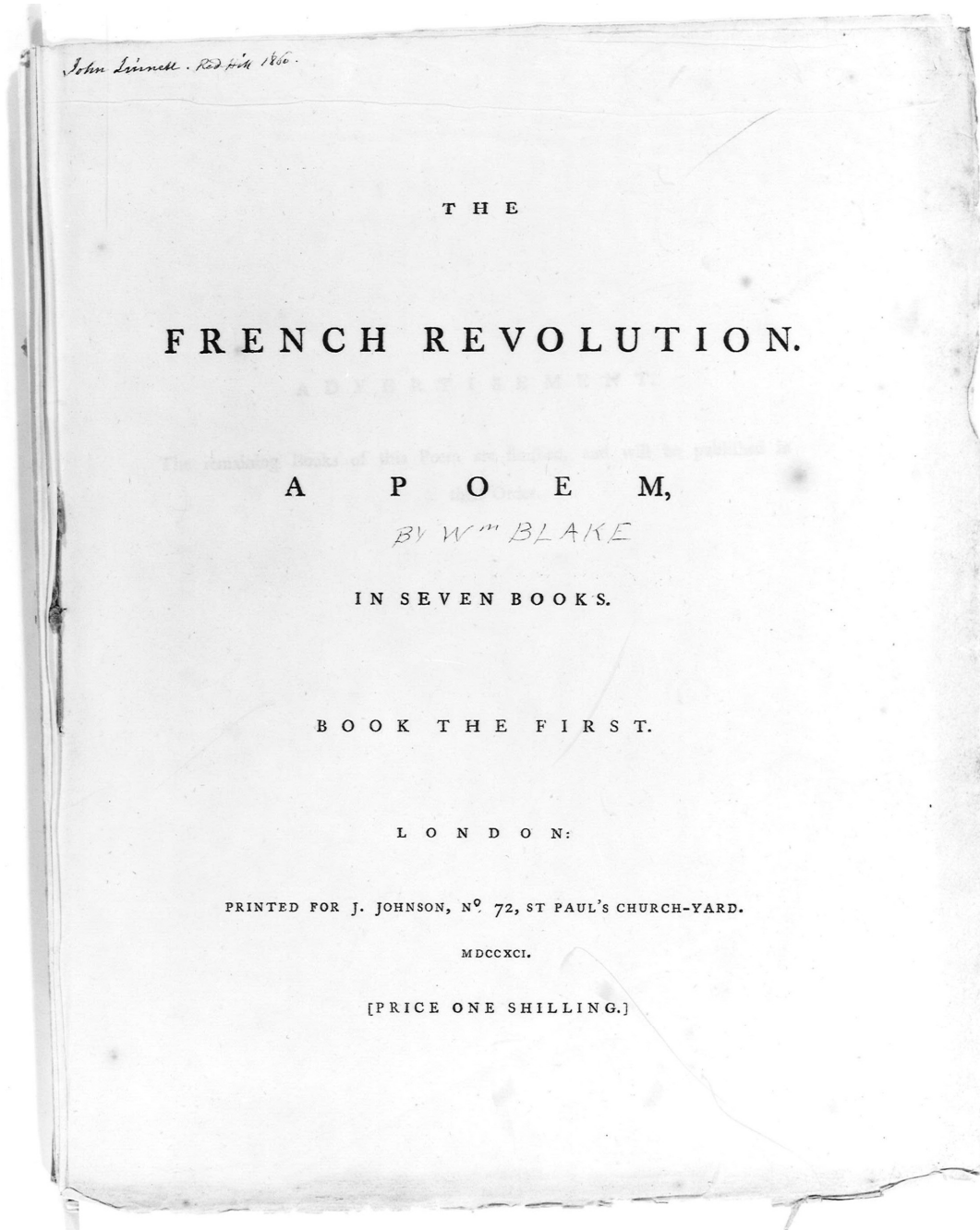
Notwithstanding the difficulty of categorizing *The Gates of Paradise*,⁷⁸ this work would not have posed such problems for Johnson in terms of political content or enthusiasm as *The French Revolution* might have done. Mee proposes that *The Gates of Paradise* 'is essentially a children's chapbook and as such was seeking to enter an expanding market of particular interest to Johnson'.⁷⁹ In any event, Johnson never published *The Gates of Paradise* and the *Analytical* does not include a notice or review of *The French Revolution*, *The Gates of Paradise* or any of the 'Illuminated Books',⁸⁰ even though Blake produced engravings for Johnson until 1804.

⁷⁷ Mee, 223.

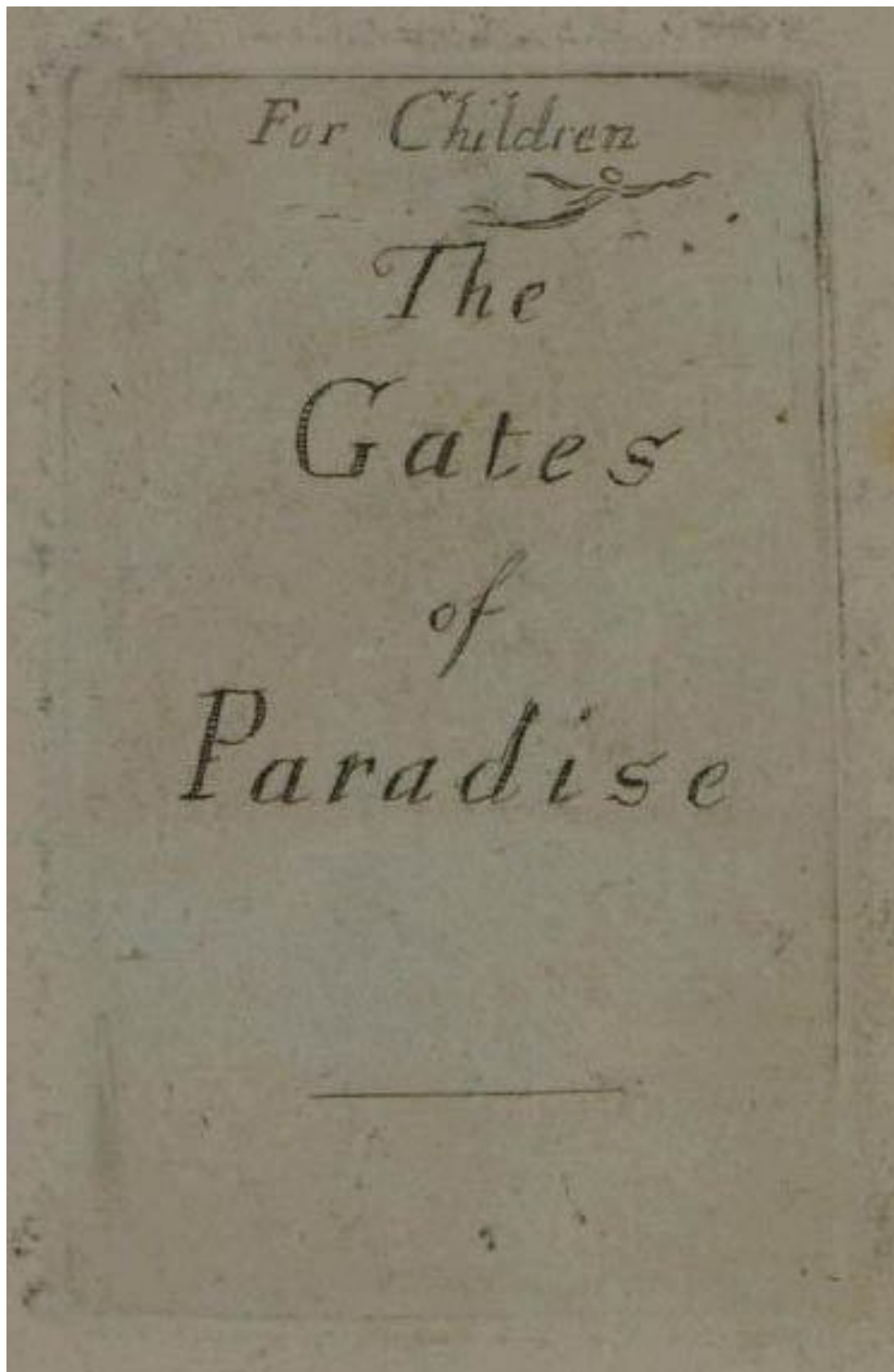
⁷⁸ Blake describes *The Gates of Paradise* as 'a small book of Engravings' in his 1793 prospectus (E 693). Pilo Nanavutty and Jean Hagstrum both associated *The Gates of Paradise* with emblem literature. See Pilo Nanavutty, 'Blake and Emblem Literature', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 15 (1952), 258-61, and Jean H. Hagstrum, *William Blake: Poet and Painter* (Chicago and London, 1964), 48-49. Suzanne Matheson challenges 'its traditional placement within emblem literature', arguing that *The Gates of Paradise* 'is not an emblem book in the original sense, nor in the more literally-minded eighteenth-century adaptations of the form' ('The Respective Functions of Text and Design in the Art of William Blake', 58 and 133). Blake re-worked the designs from *The Gates of Paradise* and incorporated them into a revised version titled *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise* (c. 1818).

⁷⁹ Mee, 219.

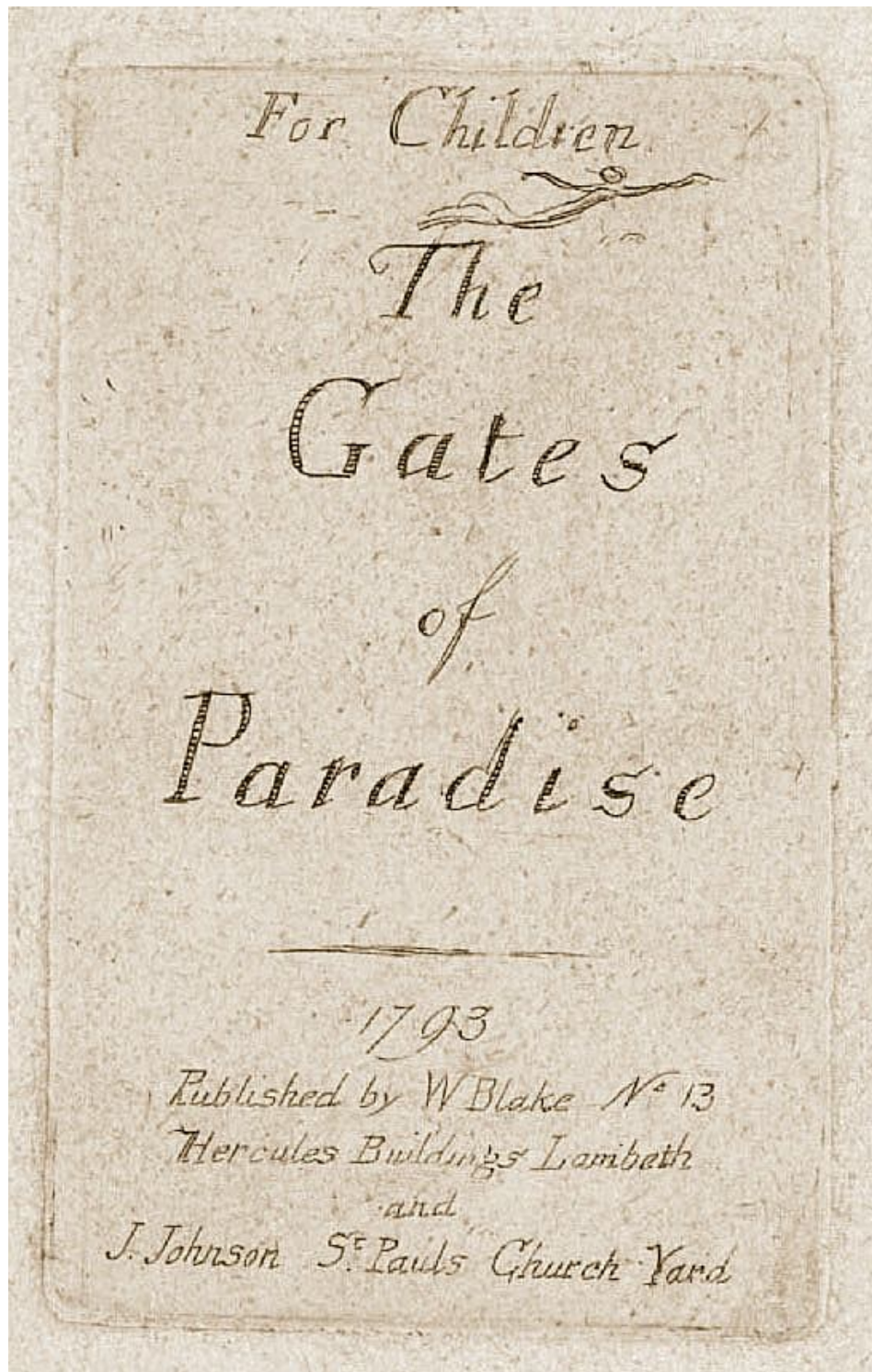
⁸⁰ Blake first called these works 'Illuminated Books' in the 1793 Prospectus (E 693).



1 *The French Revolution*, copy A, title page (1791)



2 *For Children: The Gates of Paradise*, copy A, title page (1793)



3 *For Children: The Gates of Paradise*, copy D, title page (1793)

Finally, let us consider Blake's second writing from the 1790s (after *The French Revolution*) in conventional typography: his prospectus 'TO THE PUBLIC' of 10 October 1793, which is known today only from a transcript in Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake*.⁸¹ The prospectus offers 'several Works now published and on Sale at Mr. Blake's, No. 13, Hercules Buildings, Lambeth' (E 692), including *The Book of Thel* (1789), *Songs of Innocence* (1789), *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (?1790-93), *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), *America a Prophecy* (1793), *The Gates of Paradise* and *Songs of Experience* (1794). This document also announces Blake's invention of 'a method of Printing both Letter-press and Engraving in a style more ornamental, uniform, and grand, than any before discovered' (E 692), which he believes will facilitate the presentation to 'the Public' of 'such works as have wholly absorbed the Man of Genius' (E 692). It is well known that Blake sold few copies of the Illuminated Books to his contemporaries, but his prospectus nonetheless contemplates a substantial audience for his works and notably repeats the word 'Public' five times. In this regard, Mee describes the 1790s as 'the great decade of the English illustrated book' and points out that Blake's 1793 prospectus and the publishing projects of Boydell, Thomas Macklin (1752 or 1753-1800) and Robert Bowyer (1758-1834) 'share a tone of confident expansiveness and seek to define and attract a new audience for what they present as major innovations in book publishing'.⁸² Although Blake did not benefit significantly from the contemporary interest in illustrated books, 'the times', as Marilyn Butler

⁸¹ *Gilchrist*, ii. 285-86. Also see E 892.

⁸² *Mee*, 216. For the publishing projects of Boydell, Macklin and Bowyer, see G.E. Bentley, Jr, 'The Great Illustrated-Book Publishers of the 1790's and William Blake', in Blissett (ed.), *Editing Illustrated Books: Papers given at the fifteenth annual Conference on Editorial Problems, University of Toronto, 2-3 November 1979* (New York and London, 1980), 67-77.

observes, ‘must have struck Blake as auspicious for his own experiment, books for which he supplied text, illustrations and engraving’.⁸³

‘BLAKES BOOKS AT JOHNSONS’

In 1794, the antiquarian and collector Francis Douce (1757-1834)⁸⁴ received two letters mentioning Blake from the antiquarian and travel writer Richard Twiss (1747-1821). One of Twiss’s letters to Douce is particularly important because it contains the earliest known references to *Songs of Innocence* and *The Gates of Paradise*. In his letter to Douce dated 13 September 1794, Twiss mentioned some interesting books he had recently seen:

A Lady here has just shown me a little book “the Pleasures of memory” 5th Edⁿ Poems. (by Mr. Rogers the Banker!) 1793. Cadell. 12^{mo}, with four beautiful plates and two curious works of Blake N^o 13 Hercules Build^s Lambeth. One “the gates of Paradise”, 16 etchings. 24^{mo}, the other “Songs of innocence” printed in colours. I suppose the man to be mad; but he draws very well. Have you any thing by him?⁸⁵

Douce underlined Twiss’s question with red ink and probably asked in his reply to see *The Gates of Paradise*, for in his next letter, dated 25 September 1794, Twiss wrote:

On Saturday next, 27th [...], if you will be so good as to send to the Black Bull Holborn, you will find there ready [...] Donovans insects &c. Jere. Taylor, Mandeville on Stews, & my Curtis insects & Blakes Paradise [...].⁸⁶

Later in this letter, Twiss suddenly introduces a striking remark: ‘You will see several more of Blakes books at Johnsons in St. P^s Ch. y^d’.⁸⁷

⁸³ Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760-1830* (Oxford and New York, 1981), 42.

⁸⁴ For Douce as a Blake collector, see my ‘An Unrecorded Copy of Blake’s 1809 Chaucer Prospectus’, *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 32 (1998-99), 73-74, and ‘Blake v. Cromek: A Contemporary Ruling’, *Modern Philology* 99 (2001), 66-77.

⁸⁵ BodL, Letters from Richard Twiss, MS Douce d. 39, fol. 70^v. I gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Keeper of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, to quote from letters in the Douce collection.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 72.

⁸⁷ BodL, MS Douce d. 39, fol. 72. Bentley also discusses the Twiss letters in *BR*, 65-66.

Davies suggests that Twiss loaned his own copy of *The Gates of Paradise* to Douce,⁸⁸ but it is also possible either (1) that Douce initially saw this book on loan from the ‘Lady’ mentioned by Twiss (identified by Davies as Rebekah Bliss [1749-1819])⁸⁹ or (2) that, having seen the Bliss copy, Twiss purchased his own copy and lent it to Douce. When Bliss’s library was sold in 1826, it included *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* (A), *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (P), a colored copy of *Night Thoughts* (D), an uncolored copy of *Night Thoughts*, and *The Grave*.⁹⁰ If the copy of *The Gates of Paradise* that Bliss owned at the time of her death (*i.e.*, copy A) is the same copy that Twiss described in 1794, then it seems that Twiss based his remark upon having personally seen Blake’s books in Johnson’s shop because *The Gates of Paradise* (A) is the only known copy which does *not* bear the imprint of Blake and Johnson.⁹¹ Twiss mentioned ‘two curious works of *Blake N^o 13 Hercules Build^s Lambeth*’ (my emphasis), repeating almost verbatim from the Blake-Johnson imprint as it appears on the four other known copies (B-E) of *The Gates of Paradise*:

Published by W Blake N^o 13
Hercules Buildings Lambeth
and
J. Johnson S^t Pauls Church Yard⁹²

It is probable that Twiss’s letter repeats Blake’s address in Lambeth from one of the copies (B-E) bearing the Blake-Johnson imprint rather than the copy (A) sold with the Bliss library in 1826. The only other place Blake advertised his Lambeth address in full was the prospectus ‘TO THE PUBLIC’ of 10 October 1793, and none of the Illuminated Books produced between 1790 (when the Blakes moved to Lambeth) and 1794 (*i.e.*, *The*

⁸⁸ Keri Davies, ‘Mrs Bliss: a Blake Collector of 1794’, in Clark and Worrall (eds), *Blake in the Nineties* (Basingstoke and London, 1999), 216.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 215 and 217-19.

⁹⁰ *BB*, 186-87 and 191.

⁹¹ See illustration 2 on p. 18. Also see E 800 and *BB*, 186-87.

⁹² William Blake, *The Illuminated Blake*, commentary by David V. Erdman (New York, 1975), 268.

Marriage, America, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, Europe a Prophecy [1794], the combined *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* [1794], and *The [First] Book of Urizen* [1794]) includes his house number in Hercules Buildings. *America, Europe* and *Urizen* list only ‘Lambeth’ as their place of publication.

Twiss’s letter of 25 September 1794 therefore suggests (without definitively showing) that Johnson sold Blake’s books or at least displayed copies at 72, St Paul’s Churchyard in 1794. Twiss’s casual statement that Douce might see ‘several more of Blakes books at Johnsons’ also raises a perennial question for Blake studies: what was the relationship between Blake, an engraver with aspirations to authorship, and Johnson and his circle of authors? Davies sees Twiss’s letter as ‘evidence of how Blake advertised his works in illuminated printing’⁹³ and suggests that ‘Johnson was displaying “samples” of illuminated printing [...] to attract orders’ for Blake.⁹⁴ In a letter of June 1818, Blake told Dawson Turner that he had ‘never been able to produce a Sufficient number’ of his Illuminated Books ‘for a general Sale by means of a regular Publisher’ (E 771), but Twiss’s phrasing (‘You will *see*’ rather than ‘You may *purchase*’ Blake’s books) can support Davies’s reading that Blake left copies with Johnson to display in his shop. If this is true, it elevates Blake’s status. He attains the prestige of being represented by one of the most important publishers of his time and his books would have had a place on the same shelves as the works of several notable contemporary authors.

⁹³ Davies, ‘Mrs Bliss’, 225.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 217.

BLAKE AND THE JOHNSON CIRCLE

The notion that Blake was a member of what Gilchrist called Johnson's 'remarkable coterie' was often repeated in twentieth-century scholarship.⁹⁵ That is not to say that the pronounced differences between Blake (an artisan, autodidact and enthusiast) and members of the Johnson circle have gone altogether unnoticed by scholars. David Erdman wrote, 'we must suspect most of the circumstantial details in the anecdotes of Blake's association with "the Paine set" and the Johnson "coterie"'.⁹⁶ Mee notes that 'Blake eschewed the rationalist discourse essential to the self-image of the constituency of which Johnson's coterie was a part'.⁹⁷ In his biography of Blake, Bentley observes that it is 'unlikely that the artisan William Blake was a member of this genteel gathering of earnest liberals'.⁹⁸ Considering the dearth of information, it can be difficult to establish the nature of Blake's relationship with Johnson and his circle, but there can be little doubt that Blake's social position, the enthusiastic language and imagery of his writings,⁹⁹ and his professional status as engraver would have distanced him from authors associated with or published by Johnson.

Godwin's diary, which provides information concerning those in attendance at Johnson's dinner parties, contains only one likely reference to Blake's presence: on 4 April 1797, Godwin '[d]ine[d] at Johnson's, w[ith] Fuseli, Grignion,¹⁰⁰ Blake, Dr Anderson and A Aikin'.¹⁰¹ The name 'Blake' appears 14 times in Godwin's diary, but

⁹⁵ See, *inter alia*, Bernard Blackstone, *English Blake* (Cambridge, 1949), 27-28, 43 and 47; F.B. Curtis, 'Blake and the Booksellers', *Blake Studies* 6 (1975), 168-69; and Morton D. Paley, '“To Defend the Bible in This Year 1798 Would Cost a Man His Life”', *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 32 (1998), 35 and 41.

⁹⁶ Erdman, 154.

⁹⁷ Mee, 223.

⁹⁸ *Stranger*, 110 and 470 n. 31.

⁹⁹ See Michael Scrivener, 'A Swedenborgian Visionary and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*', *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 21 (1987-88), 102.

¹⁰⁰ This is probably Charles Grignion (1717-1810), an engraver. See David V. Erdman, '“Blake” Entries in Godwin's Diary', *Notes and Queries* 198 (1953), 355.

¹⁰¹ BodL, Diary of William Godwin, MS Abinger e. 8, fol. 15^r. I gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Keeper of Special Collections of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, to quote from the

some of these entries are explicit references to ‘A Blake’. Erdman proposed that the references to ‘A Blake’ concern Arthur Blake, a member of the Society for Constitutional Information, secretary of the United Political Societies of Norwich, and friend of Holcroft.¹⁰² Godwin’s occasional use of the initial ‘A’ to distinguish Arthur Blake increases the likelihood that Godwin meant to specify the presence of William Blake at the April 1797 dinner.¹⁰³ Notwithstanding the lack of certainty concerning this diary entry, three facts can be authenticated: (1) Johnson consistently employed Blake’s graver in the early 1790s, (2) he considered Blake competent to undertake such important tasks as engraving the illustrations of the Portland Vase¹⁰⁴ and Fuseli’s ‘Fertilization of Egypt’ for Darwin’s *Botanic Garden* (1791), and (3) in his career as a commercial engraver Blake illustrated more books for Johnson than for any other publisher.¹⁰⁵ The persistent notion that Blake associated with the Johnson circle obviously derives from his longstanding professional relationship with Johnson but also gains support from Blake’s own comments. For example, in the letter to Cumberland cited above, Blake wrote of his disappointing lack of employment and how his survival was a ‘Miracle’: ‘Since my Youngs Night Thoughts have been publishd Even Johnson & Fuseli have discarded my Graver’ (E 704). The phrasing (‘Even Johnson’) suggests that Blake looked upon Johnson as a reliable source of employment and support throughout the decade. As Luisa Calè suggests, however, there are other factors to consider with

Abinger papers.

¹⁰² See Erdman, ‘“Blake” Entries in Godwin’s Diary’, 355, and *Erdman*, 160-01.

¹⁰³ See *id.*, ‘“Blake” Entries in Godwin’s Diary’, 355-56. I am grateful to Kathryn Barush for sharing information from the unpublished Leverhulme Trust research project, ‘William Godwin’s Diary: Reconstructing a Social and Political Culture, 1788-1836’.

¹⁰⁴ Darwin and Johnson both spoke highly of Blake’s engraving skills. On 9 July 1791, Darwin wrote to Josiah Wedgwood, ‘the name of the engraver I don’t know, but Johnson said He is capable of doing anything well’ (*BR*, 60). On 23 July 1791, Johnson wrote to Darwin, ‘Blake is certainly capable of making an exact copy of the vase, I believe more so than Mr. B[artolozzi]’ (*ibid.*).

¹⁰⁵ See Geoffrey Keynes, *Blake Studies: Essays on His Life and Work*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1971), 60-61; *BBS*, 186-88; and *BR*, 813-20 and 824.

respect to Blake's sense of professional disappointment in 1799: 'Johnson was awaiting a jail sentence and Fuseli was dejected because of the disappointing turnout at the Milton Gallery'.¹⁰⁶

Without question, Blake was personally known to several members of Johnson's community of writers. Was this, however, merely in terms of his trade – reproductive engraving – rather than as a writer like themselves? Finding an answer to this question has been complicated by the fact that some scholars have placed Blake among the Revolution controversialists as an undifferentiated participant. For instance, Alfred Cobban's *The Debate on the French Revolution* excerpts Blake's *French Revolution* among 'First Impressions' of the new dawn in France without commenting as to why it should be included. More recently, Lisa Plummer Crafton has argued that Blake's poem participates in 'the revolution debate of the 1790s, specifically the [...] pamphlets and poetry responding to [...] Edmund Burke',¹⁰⁷ but her analysis is disappointingly general and fails to substantiate in any detail her claim that 'Blake's work resonates with the words and ideas of Burke'.¹⁰⁸ Claims of this kind are unconvincing. I wish to argue, in a more specific way, that, notwithstanding the differences separating him from Johnson's respectable rationalist authors, several features of Blake's work – his allusions, choices of form, figurations of revolution, rhetoric, themes and the dates of his compositions – coincide in distinctive ways with certain works published by Johnson. A systematic examination of Blake's productions of the period 1790 through 1795 as they relate to the 'Revolution controversy' and other works published by Johnson reveals

¹⁰⁶ Luisa Calè, 'Blake and the Literary Galleries', in Haggarty and Mee (eds), *Blake and Conflict* (Basingstoke and London, 2009), 204. Johnson's six-month prison sentence began on 11 February 1799. See Smyser, 'The Trial and Imprisonment of Joseph Johnson, Bookseller', 419 and 430-31, and Tyson, 163-65.

¹⁰⁷ Lisa Plummer Crafton, 'Blake's Swinish Multitude: The Response to Burke in Blake's *The French Revolution*', *The Friend: Comment on Romanticism* 2 (1993), 2.

¹⁰⁸ Crafton, 'Blake's Swinish Multitude', 2.

Blake's engagement with the interests and writings of the Johnson circle. Such an examination can also show the extent to which Blake's works are sites of convergence between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forms of discursive production – how they illustrate, as Iain McCalman phrases it, the 'intricate overlap between the allegedly separate spheres of "respectability" and "roughness"'.¹⁰⁹

There have been successful attempts to relate Blake's work to issues of interest to Johnson and his authors. Most notably, John Howard argued that Blake addressed *The Marriage* to 'a quite specific audience [...] composed of members of the New Jerusalem Church and of the Joseph Johnson circle', and that the Johnson circle in particular 'would [...] catch many of the ironic jabs and the personal allusions' to Swedenborgians of the New Church.¹¹⁰ Although Blake probably completed *The Marriage* before the publication of Priestley's *Letters to the Members of The New Jerusalem Church* (1791) (significantly anticipating Priestley's remonstrance with members of the New Church), Blake's proximity to Johnson and his circle suggests a shared origin for ideas in *The Marriage* and Priestley's *Letters*, as I argue in Chapter 1.

Many of the reviewers for the *Analytical* were also members of the Johnson circle and the literary dinners mentioned by Gilchrist could have exposed Blake (if he was not already reading the *Analytical*) to specific topics treated in the reviews. The practice in the *Analytical* of not signing reviews (or of signing with pseudonymous initials) complicates any attempt to extrapolate a consensus position for the Johnson circle on the basis of opinions expressed there. However, Blake often explores the same topics that appear in the *Analytical*. One example of a coincidence of Blake's stance

¹⁰⁹ Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge, 1988), 3.

¹¹⁰ John Howard, 'An Audience for *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*', *Blake Studies* 3 (1970), 20.

with that of the *Analytical* can be observed the September 1789 review of John Clowes's *Dialogues on the Nature, Design and Evidence of the Theological Writings of the Hon. Emanuel Swedenborg*. The reviewer ('I.') found more imitation than innovation in Swedenborg's writings:

every virtue which tends to the ornament and perfection of the Christian character [has] been taught with more energy than ever Baron Swedenborg could teach them; and every thing which might be called *his own* [...] can be considered only as the reveries of a mind that had indulged in speculation so long, till every new thought became a new hypothesis [...].¹¹¹

Blake would develop this criticism in *The Marriage*: 'Swedenborg boasts that what he writes is new; tho' it is only the Contents or Index of already publish'd books [...] a recapitulation of all superficial opinions, and an analysis of the more sublime, but no further' (E 42-43, pls 21-22). As Howard observed, several reviews in the *Analytical* between April 1789 and October 1792 similarly ridiculed the visionary pretensions of Swedenborg ('a SEER, that held communication with the invisible world of spirits and angels'),¹¹² while 'M.D.' (perhaps the signature of Aikin)¹¹³ dismissed the principles of Swedenborgianism as 'nothing more than a repetition of the mystical doctrine of Plato concerning the abstract contemplation of the First Good, Intellect, and the World of Ideas'.¹¹⁴ Based upon his study of the production history of *The Marriage*, Joseph Viscomi hypothesizes that Blake originally conceived plates 21-24 'as an independent, anti-Swedenborgian pamphlet'¹¹⁵ and demonstrates that 'Swedenborgian rhetoric, images and ideas figure consistently'¹¹⁶ throughout the work that evolved from these

¹¹¹ AR 5 (September 1789), 64.

¹¹² Ibid., 63.

¹¹³ Aikin was a physician as well as a writer.

¹¹⁴ AR 8 (November 1790), 332 (review by 'M.D.' of Thomas Thorild's *True Heavenly Religion Restored, and Demonstrated upon Eternal Principles*). For disparaging treatments of Swedenborg and the New Church, see AR 3 (April 1789), 459; 5 (November 1789), 352-53; 6 (January 1790), 80; 8 (November 1790), 332-33; Appendix to 11 (1791), 517-20; and 14 (October 1792), 190-93.

¹¹⁵ Joseph Viscomi, 'The Evolution of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 58 (1996), 283.

¹¹⁶ Id., 'In the Caves of Heaven and Hell: Swedenborg and Printmaking in Blake's *Marriage*', in Clark and

first plates and not simply on the four plates where Blake mentions him by name (plates 3, 19, 21 and 22). Viscomi's research seems to reinforce Howard's view that Blake was a participant in an ongoing and specifically anti-Swedenborgian discussion centered in the Johnson circle.

THE 'REVOLUTION CONTROVERSY' AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Following the suggestion of Howard, I see Blake's works from 1790 to 1795 as an ongoing attempt to engage with imagery, language and themes appearing in the works of Johnson's authors, including works associated with the Revolution controversy.¹¹⁷ The terms 'controversy' and 'debate' can be misleading when applied to the full range of discursive practices in Britain during the early 1790s,¹¹⁸ and I propose a distinction between the broader 'controversy' (which began in November 1789 with Price's *Discourse on the Love of Our Country* and concluded around the end of 1795) and the shorter 'debate' (which concluded by late 1792 and comprises works responding primarily to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [1790] and both parts of Paine's *Rights of Man* [1791 and 1792]).¹¹⁹ The works comprising the longer Revolution controversy take a variety of forms (such as articles, broadsheets, essays, letters, oratory, pamphlets, prints, reviews and even government proclamations)¹²⁰ and touch many different disciplines (including biblical translation, history, medicine,

Worrall (eds), *Blake in the Nineties*, 56.

¹¹⁷ For a survey of the Revolution controversy in England during the period 1789-97, see Gregory Claeys (ed.), *Political Writings of the 1790s* (London, 1995), vol. i, pp. xvii-xlvii.

¹¹⁸ Mark Philp, 'Introduction', in id. (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991), 13 ('the term "debate" needs to be handled with caution' with respect to 'the period 1789-1803').

¹¹⁹ Although Butler refers to the 'pamphlet war of the 1790s' as the 'Revolution debate', she also seems to envision the 'debate' as a phase within the longer Revolution controversy. See Marilyn Butler (ed.), *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge, 1984), 1, 5 and 9-11.

¹²⁰ Mark Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice* (Ithaca, 1986), 67, and id., 'Introduction', 14.

philosophy, physiology, poetry, politics, psychology, scriptural commentary, science and theology). Bearing in mind that the Revolution controversy is a protean phenomenon and that the evolving perspectives and commitments of many participants caused it to lose the character of a ‘debate’ (in the sense of individual writers arguing *tête-à-tête*) perhaps as early as the middle of 1792,¹²¹ my investigation nonetheless envisions Blake consistently attempting an exchange with the Johnson circle (or, more generally, with works published by Johnson) from 1790 through 1795.

Jürgen Habermas’s interdisciplinary study, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), and recent critical responses to Habermas suggest certain emphases for my consideration of Blake in relation to Johnson’s authors and the Revolution controversy. Though Habermas’s formulation has been criticized for failing to distinguish adequately between an ideal model and the historical context from which it derives,¹²² as well as for its neglect of ‘subaltern’ publics and counterpublics,¹²³ his idea of the public sphere as a theoretically inclusive space for rational-critical discussion in which the identity or social status of participants was disregarded¹²⁴ provides two considerations behind my approach to Blake’s productions of 1790-95. That is, I wish to demonstrate how shared discourses, imagery and language in the works of Blake and the Johnson circle may be read as evidence of Blake’s desire to be an artist and author in the

¹²¹ Mark Philp, ‘The fragmented ideology of reform’, in id. (ed.), *The French Revolution in British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991), 61.

¹²² See Keith Michael Baker, ‘Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France: Variations on a Theme by Habermas’, in Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1992), 182-83; Geoff Eley, ‘Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century’, in *ibid.*, 292-93; and Anthony J. La Vopa, ‘Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe’, *Journal of Modern History* 64 (1992), 103-04 and 107.

¹²³ See Eley, ‘Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures’, 303-06, and Nancy Fraser, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy’, in Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 115-16 and 122-24. I borrow the term ‘subaltern’ from Fraser (*ibid.*, 123).

¹²⁴ Habermas argues that the public sphere, ‘far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether’ (*Habermas*, 36). Habermas also considers Britain the ‘Model Case’ for the development of the public sphere (*ibid.*, 57).

public sphere and how his profession and social status may have prevented the realization of such aspirations.¹²⁵ Obviously, the social rank and language of a writer or speaker are mutually inscribed and not so easily separated, which Habermas acknowledges.¹²⁶ Moreover, influential eighteenth-century theories of language and mind, encoded in grammars and dictionaries, judicial decisions and legislative proceedings, helped determine who was fit to participate in public life and hindered the non-classically educated and the ‘vulgar’ from joining polite literary culture.¹²⁷

Pace the model put forward by Habermas,¹²⁸ then, I acknowledge the exclusionary tendencies of the Johnson circle and its resistance, as a constituency of the dominant public sphere, to certain forms of ‘counterpublicity’ and the involvement of the masses in the Enlightenment. I also acknowledge difficulties in attempting to define such a heterogeneous grouping as ‘the Johnson circle’,¹²⁹ yet most ‘members’ of the circle – and certainly the *Analytical* reviewers among them – seem to have shared what Paul Keen calls ‘the professional ambitions of authors to establish the prestige of their

¹²⁵ I am not attempting a critique of Habermas and I acknowledge problems in applying his model of the public sphere to the contextual study of Blake and his works. As Steve Clark and David Worrall note, ‘when deployed at any length, the concept itself proves chimerical and elusive, always about to come into being rather than actually existent and more often defined through what it excludes rather than what it enables’ (‘Introduction’, in Clark and Worrall [eds], *Blake, Nation and Empire* [Basingstoke and New York, 2006], 5).

¹²⁶ Habermas, 85. Cf. Fraser, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere’, 119: ‘discursive interaction within the bourgeois public sphere was governed by protocols of style and decorum that were themselves correlates and markers of status inequality. These functioned informally to marginalize women and members of the plebeian classes and to prevent them from participating as peers.’

¹²⁷ See Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford, 1984), vii and 2-3.

¹²⁸ ‘However exclusive the public might be in any given instance, it could never close itself off entirely and become consolidated as a clique; for it always understood and found itself immersed within a more inclusive public of all private people, persons who—insofar as they were propertied and educated—as readers, listeners, and spectators could avail themselves via the market of the objects that were subject to discussion.’ (Habermas, 37). Also cf. *ibid.*, 85: ‘The public sphere of civil society stood or fell with the principle of universal access. A public sphere from which specific groups would be *eo ipso* excluded was less than merely incomplete; it was not a public sphere at all.’

¹²⁹ For example, attending Johnson’s dinners, personal friendship with Johnson, and being published by Johnson all could have meant quite different things, yet for the sake of simplicity I consider any of these factors individually to be a token of ‘membership’ in the circle.

position'.¹³⁰ Their rationalist discourse defined their respectability and qualification to engage in political discussion at the same time as it distinguished them from other groups that newly sought to participate in the public sphere.

Recent scholarship postulates the fracturing of eighteenth-century British readers into multiple and sometimes competing publics,¹³¹ which leads some of Blake's interpreters to place different aspects of his work 'within plural and apparently incompatible spheres'.¹³² The shifting boundaries and evolving interests of these contemporary publics present significant difficulties when one attempts to define them with respect to Blake's work. My study therefore deliberately avoids analysis of the proliferation of contemporary publics, yet I envision the *Analytical* continually responding to an important by-product of the fragmentation of British readership in the period. That is (as Keen remarks of the 1790s),

reviews were now required to perform the more conservative task of preserving the coherence of the republic of letters as a unique cultural domain (and therefore of upholding the claims for the social distinction of authors) by taming those political and cultural pressures which threatened to erode literature's unique social function.¹³³

¹³⁰ Paul Keen, *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s: Print Culture and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1999), 78. Cf. La Vopa, 'Conceiving a Public', 95: 'The meritocratic ideal was a powerful bonding agent for the aristocrats and the educated and propertied commoners brought together in Enlightenment sociability [...] its ideal of enlightened self-cultivation and self-discipline [...] marked their new sense of distance from the crudity and violence, the superstition and "enthusiasm," of plebeian culture'.

¹³¹ See, for example, Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison and London, 1987), 20 ('As the journals multiplied, they registered the increasingly heterogeneous play of sociolects—the discourses of emerging professions, conflicting social spheres, men and women, the cultivated middle-class audience, and less sophisticated readerships') and 44 ('The new periodical writing of the 1790s foregrounds the discontinuity of publics'). Also see Keen, *The Crisis of Literature*, 140 ('the democratization of reading did not just expand the reading public, it fractured it into multiple overlapping publics with competing priorities, points of consensus, and normative assumptions').

¹³² Clark and Worrall, 'Introduction', 5. Worrall sees Blake's works as 'integral with a complex artisan public sphere' and also related to an 'intricate 1790s radical public sphere' ('Blake and 1790s Plebeian Radical Culture', in Clark and Worrall [eds], *Blake in the Nineties*, 200 and 202). Mee associates Blake with the 'Millenarian Public Sphere': 'Blake and his fellow millenarians looked to the imminent fulfillment of an older communitarian vision, founded on the authority of the believer's inner light and self-consciously hostile to polite learning and reason' ('"The Doom of Tyrants"', 98).

¹³³ Keen, *The Crisis of Literature*, 117.

The advertisement ‘To the Public’ prefaced to the *Analytical* describes literary journalists as ‘the HISTORIANS of the Republic of Letters’,¹³⁴ and they had the power to notice, praise, condemn or ignore new literature as they wrote the literary history of their time. I have already observed that Blake was never noticed as an author in the *Analytical*. In light of Keen’s observation, one might argue that Blake’s works did not need to be ‘tamed’ by the *Analytical* because they posed no threat to the republic of letters. Whether their being ignored by the *Analytical* is an instance of passive or deliberate exclusion is a matter addressed implicitly in Chapter 3, where I consider how the *Analytical* might have responded to *The French Revolution*. In other works produced between 1790 and 1795, Blake clearly addresses matters familiar to the Johnson circle, but even in those instances where he agrees with their positions Blake’s manner and style would probably have alienated this group and marked him as an outsider. Mee valuably points out that Blake occupies a peculiar position relative to the expanding public sphere of late eighteenth-century Britain because his productions, ‘while participating in much that was progressive’, also ‘substantiate a great deal of the language and perspectives of what was excluded as unrespectable’.¹³⁵

To respond to the matter of Blake’s occupation of ‘plural and apparently incompatible spheres’¹³⁶ as well as the evolving character of the Revolution controversy, I find helpful Mee’s concept of ‘bricolage’, which he defines as ‘an approach which unapologetically recombines elements from across discourse boundaries’.¹³⁷ In contrast

¹³⁴ *AR* 1 (1788), iv.

¹³⁵ *Mee*, 225.

¹³⁶ See n. 132, above.

¹³⁷ *Mee*, 3. Mee develops his concept of bricolage from Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *La Pensée Sauvage* (1962). Also cf. Weir, *Brahma in the West*, 15: ‘The difficulties of Blake are such that the compartmentalization of the poet into Dissenter, Radical, Miltonist, and Mystic are inevitable and ultimately helpful. But Blake, for all his contradictions, was after all one person who was somehow capable of sustaining continuities among these four traditions that have latterly been transformed into separate, single-minded approaches to the poet. In Blake’s time, and in Blake’s work, the religious, political, literary, and mystical strands were

to the frameworks adopted in earlier contextual and historical studies of Blake, such as Jacob Bronowski's *William Blake (1757-1827): A Man Without a Mask* (1943),¹³⁸ Schorer's *The Politics of Vision*,¹³⁹ and Erdman's *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (1954),¹⁴⁰ bricolage facilitates a demonstration of the relationships between Blake's works of the 1790s and contemporary events, images and writings.¹⁴¹ Mee argues that '[m]any radicals in the 1790s took up the role of the bricoleur; they relished breaking down those discourses which had cultural authority and creating from them new languages of liberation'.¹⁴² While my approach to Blake does not minimize the subversive and transgressive practices Mee associates with bricolage,¹⁴³ I also wish to emphasize the eirenic and non-combative aspects of Blake's bricolage as evidence of his desire to join, not simply to undermine, the republic of letters.¹⁴⁴ Another aspect of Mee's understanding of bricolage, where '[a]spects traceable to the issues and language

much more tightly interwoven than their subsequent disentanglement suggests.'

¹³⁸ J. Bronowski, *William Blake (1757-1827): A Man Without a Mask* (New York, 1967), 2 ('the story of Blake the engraver') and 131 ('We find [Blake's life] eccentric, only if we miss its context, which is made by his writings and his times together: the context of a man living in a public, not a private world.').

¹³⁹ Schorer, 134 ('The radical content of his poetry came out of well-known revolutionary discussion concentrated in the thought of that "remarkable coterie" associated with [...] Joseph Johnson [...]. Yet the influence on Blake of republicans like Price and Paine and Priestley, of anarchists like Holcroft and Godwin, of the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft [...], is a focus for Blake rather than a "source," an atmosphere of opinion in which he found a direction rather than a set of fixed ideas.').

¹⁴⁰ Erdman, xiv ('I have read the newspapers and looked at the prints and paintings and sampled the debates and pamphlets of Blake's time. As Blake would say, I have "walked up & down" in the history of that time.').

¹⁴¹ Obviously, the lack of a clear date of publication for some of Blake's works complicates such an undertaking, and I acknowledge the dangers of attempting to relate certain aspects of Blake's texts to historical particulars, such as contemporary events, the writings of other authors, or reviews published in the *Analytical*. Therefore, I generally cite the month and year of contemporary events or publications only when such particularity provides a helpful context for my argument.

¹⁴² Mee, 9.

¹⁴³ Cf. Andrew Lincoln, 'Blake and the history of radicalism', in Williams (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in William Blake Studies* (Basingstoke and New York, 2006), 233 n. 3: 'Mee may need a more specific terminology to distinguish Blake's subversion of hegemonic authority from [...] transformative "recombining" of discourses, which is a common feature of many kinds of writing.'

¹⁴⁴ In more recent work, Mee acknowledges this duality in Blake's relationship with the public sphere. Drawing parallels between Blake and the enthusiastic publisher Richard 'Citizen' Lee, Mee notes Blake's paradoxical wish 'to transform or even destroy the classical public sphere, while at the same seeking to participate more fully in it' ('"The Doom of Tyrants"', 112).

of one discourse can also be made sense of in other discursive contexts',¹⁴⁵ is significant for my approach to Blake because it helps explain why I discuss the same discourse, figure or image in more than one context (such as 'energy' in Chapters 1 and 2 or 'nature' in Chapters 3 and 4).

In the pages that follow, I concentrate on Blake's responses to discourses and topical concerns of interest to the Johnson circle. In Chapter 1, I discuss Blake's treatment in *The Marriage* of body and soul, the natures of God and Jesus Christ, and Swedenborgianism in relation to Priestley's *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (1782) and *Letters to the Members of The New Jerusalem Church*. Chapter 2 considers *The Marriage* as an attempt to join the Revolution controversy and compares this work with writings by Price, Wollstonecraft and Paine. Chapter 2 also assesses the relationship between *The Marriage* and radical diabolism (with reference to Johnson as a publisher of Milton) and Blake's engagement with 'energy' as a distinctively radical concept that appears in the work of Darwin, Fuseli, Godwin, Priestley and Wollstonecraft. In Chapter 3, I consider topical representations in *The French Revolution*, including contemporary writings concerning the Bastille, and compare Blake's handling of such matters with Burke's *Reflections* and responses to Burke by authors published by Johnson. Chapter 3 concludes with an analysis of the response *The French Revolution* might have elicited from the *Analytical Review*. Chapter 4 approaches *The French Revolution* in terms of the contemporary discourses of ancient liberty, nature and the sublime, once again in comparison with responses to *Reflections* by members of the Johnson circle (in particular, Price, Wollstonecraft, Christie and Paine). My discussion of the sublime in Chapter 4 also considers the possible influence on *The French Revolution* of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas*

¹⁴⁵ *Mee*, 8.

of the *Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*. Chapter 5 examines Blake's work as the prophet-author of *America, Europe* and *The Song of Los* (1795) in relation to scholarly writings concerning prophecy published by Johnson (primarily Lowth's *Lectures* and Priestley's 1793 and 1794 Fast Day sermons). The latter half of Chapter 5 compares certain aspects of the works of Blake and Richard Brothers with Priestley's Fast Day sermons, suggesting that Blake and Priestley's works of 1793 and 1794 are rather less dissimilar than traditionally assumed. Chapter 6 discusses *Urizen, The Book of Ahania* (1795) and *The Book of Los* (1795) in light of biblical criticism from the 1780s and 1790s (with particular reference to the *Analytical* and the writings of Geddes and Paine). The final section of Chapter 6 reads *Ahania* in terms of the contemporary debate regarding the doctrine of the Atonement, which had theological as well as political implications in the 1790s. Finally, my Conclusion revisits my discussion in Chapter 5 of similarities between Priestley and Blake and proposes that they are not so far apart in ideas and the content of their works as modern scholars usually argue. Although I focus on eight works – *The Marriage, The French Revolution, America, Europe, Song of Los, Urizen, Book of Ahania* and *Book of Los* – and how they respond to Johnson's publications or various aspects of the Revolution controversy, I also periodically seek illumination in Blake's other works from the period 1782-95, including *An Island in the Moon, All Religions are One* (c. 1788), *There is No Natural Religion* (c. 1788), his annotations to Lavater (c. 1788) and Swedenborg (c. 1788-90), *Visions of the Daughters of Albion, Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, and Blake's commercial engravings and separate plates.