

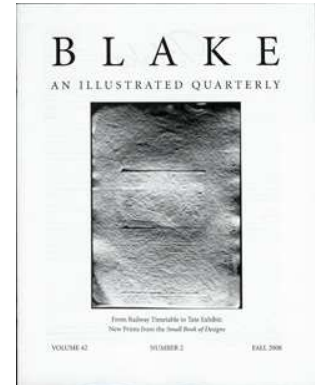
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY  
**BLAKE**

D I S C U S S I O N

Response to Anne K. Mellor

Helen P. Bruder

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 42, Issue 2, Fall 2008, pp. 78-79



Carleton, amateur Cork artist, visited the Blakes provides an intriguing context for Blake's observation to Hayley that both Penelope Chetwynd and her brother "were much pleased with Romneys Designs" that Blake had borrowed from various sources to engrave for Hayley's *Life of George Romney*.

The "M. Chetwynd" who, according to John Carr, was taught painting by Blake and Hayley at Felpham in September 1801, can now be identified. Catharine Kearsley, in her *Kearsley's Complete Peerage, of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1794), writes of "William [Chetwynd] who married Penelope Carleton, by whom he has issue, a son and 3 daughters . . ." <sup>21</sup> According to Hayley (cited above), Penelope Chetwynd's eldest child Penelope was aged fifteen in 1800. She must therefore have been born about 1785, a year or two after her parents married. Penelope Chetwynd's only son, John, can therefore have been no younger than eight and no older than fifteen in 1801. <sup>22</sup> John Chetwynd was therefore old enough to be "M. Chetwynd," the "noble Youth" referred to by Carr. Hayley and Blake taught painting not to Penelope Chetwynd's brother, but to her orphaned son, young John Chetwynd. <sup>23</sup>

In the light of the new information concerning Penelope Carleton Chetwynd discussed in this note, it is clear that Mrs. Chetwynd is of significance to Blake studies. As a female member of the gentry she, like Rebekah Bliss, challenges the commonplace view of Blake's audience as male, radical, and dissenting. Her nationality is also important. Previously, the only identified Irish customers for Blake's work were Martin Archer Shee (of Dublin) and Sir Richard Newcomen Gore-Booth (of Sligo), subscribers to Robert Hartley Cromek's edition of Blair's *Grave* in 1808. <sup>24</sup> Even more significantly,

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html>; see also Richard Sainthill, *An Olla Podrida; or, Scraps, Numismatic, Antiquarian and Literary* (London: Nicholls and Son, 1844) 227. Blake's fellow printmaker and artist James Barry also hailed from Cork.

On 2 April 1816 the *Limerick General Advertiser* reported that on "Tuesday [26 March] morning a duel took place at the Dublin Turnpike, near Cork, between Walter Croker Esq and Webber Carleton Esq and after exchanging shots without injury to either party, the business was adjusted." Webber's involvement in this potentially fatal conflict sits strangely with Blake's estimation of Penelope Chetwynd's brother as a man "mild & polite in soul."

21. Catharine Kearsley, *Kearsley's Complete Peerage, of England, Scotland and Ireland; Together with an Extinct Peerage of the Three Kingdoms* (London: C. and G. Kearsley, 1794) 397.

22. See *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage*, 92nd ed. (London: Burke's Peerage Ltd., 1934) 528.

23. As Marsh's and Carr's allusions to Mr. Chetwynd are dated June and September 1801 and Charlotte Smith's references to Mrs. Chetwynd date from April and October 1801, we may infer that Penelope Chetwynd's son John Chetwynd was staying with his mother and sisters Penelope, Lucy, and Emily near Felpham, c. April-October 1801. John and his three sisters are listed in John Debrett, *Debrett's Peerage of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London: William Pickering, 1840) 156.

In a letter to Hayley dated 19 August 1800, John Flaxman writes of Blake's projected move to Felpham: "I see no reason why he should not make as good a livelihood there as in London, if he engraves & teaches drawing, by which he may gain considerably . . ." (BR[2] 94-95).

24. See BR(2) 214; Robert N. Essick and Morton D. Paley, *Robert Blair's The Grave Illustrated by William Blake: A Study with Facsimile* (London:

we now know that Blake was in touch with someone personally affected by the "horror & distress" caused by the recent troubles in Ireland. Blake's relationship with Mrs. Chetwynd therefore provides a new perspective for his numerous references to Ireland in his later illuminated books, including his writing of "the majestic form of Erin in eternal tears." <sup>25</sup> Mrs. Chetwynd's social position is also telling. In *The Everlasting Gospel*, A. L. Morton suggests that "because Blake was a working man he never lost his class passion or his faith in a revolutionary solution." <sup>26</sup> More recently, E. P. Thompson has suggested that a politically radical and dissenting Blake maintained a "conscious posture of hostility to . . . polite culture." <sup>27</sup> However, Blake's brief account of his meeting with Mrs. Chetwynd and Mr. Carleton in 1804 suggests that the poet-artist was at ease with members of the gentry. The class distinctions Morton and Thompson look for seem curiously absent in Blake's encounter. Finally, Blake's finding a buyer for his work in William Hayley's intimate friend Mrs. Chetwynd continues the revision of Blake scholarship's perception of Hayley. Even when making love to "M<sup>r</sup> C.," Hayley appears to have been looking out for Blake.

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Scolar Press, 1982). Shee's student Martin Cregan of County Meath visited the Blakes at 17 South Molton Street in 1809 (BR[2] 281). However, there is no evidence of his purchasing any of Blake's works.

25. E 245. Rather than Wright's identification of Penelope Chetwynd with Gwendolen (see note 6 above), another passage from *Jerusalem* in which Blake associates the neighborhood of South Molton Street with sufferings in Ireland seems more pertinent in this context: "Dinah, the youthful form of Erin / The Wound I see in South Molton S[t]reet & Stratford place / Whence Joseph & Benjamin roll'd apart away from the Nations" (E 230). See also Blake's reference to "the [war?] Widows tear" in *The Grey Monk* (E 489).

26. A. L. Morton, *The Everlasting Gospel* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1958) 18.

27. E. P. Thompson, *Witness against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (New York: New Press, 1993) xviii.

## D I S C U S S I O N

*With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows of thought*

### Response to Anne K. Mellor

BY HELEN P. BRUDER

MUCH of the displeasure expressed in Anne K. Mellor's review of my book *Women Reading William Blake* [Blake 41.4 (spring 2008): 164-65] appears to derive from her conviction that it should have been about something else: "the



real challenge of such a volume," she insists, is the question "was Blake a misogynist?" This certainly was *the* issue in the eighties and nineties, and inspired by Mellor's writing (and that of a dozen other trailblazers, whose work I'm delighted my volume well represents), I made my own attempt to weigh the evidence.<sup>1</sup> Priorities change, though, and when I returned to survey gender studies in the early noughties, the well-nigh 100 pieces of scholarship I reviewed persuaded me that we'd entered a new era, characterized by diversity and profusion, of both concerns and perspectives.<sup>2</sup> Sadly, what hadn't changed much was the Blake establishment's reluctance to give women's varied voices a proportionate place within trendsetting collections, guides, surveys of Blake studies, and so forth, and it was my desire to redress *that* imbalance which shaped my collection. In essence, my book does what it says on the tin: women read Blake. Misogyny interests many of us, but not others, and that's up to them. What I wanted to produce was an accessible book which celebrated the vibrant intellectual passions of a community of female scholars, and Mellor's criticism that "several of the essays do not even belong in this volume. Except for the fact that they happen to be written by women, they have almost nothing to say about Blake's visual or verbal construction of gender and/or sexuality ..." reveals her coolness toward my structuring premise. (It also, incidentally, indicates a somewhat blithe approach toward content, for the pieces on "lucid dreaming, Moravianism, Hinduism, Lavater, and Old Norse mythology" which she selects are *all* concerned with gender.)

Our views differ generically too. From my perspective the book is enriched by its mix of what she terms "disparate" contributors and "multifarious" tidbits, but for Mellor my alphabetical ordering of these 30 morsels characterizes a work "deeply marred by ... poor organization." That's a fair, if subjective, call, though "hodge-podge" is perhaps a drop acidic? Mellor is free, of course, to dislike the hullabaloo which accompanies my blatantly attention-seeking inclusion of pieces by Tracy Chevalier and Germaine Greer, but her own summary of the collection's other contents shows that many do in fact cohere around some broad, key themes (questions of sexual power, naturally, the role of Blake's art in women's lives, his relationship with his neglected female contemporaries, the importance of internationalism in Blake studies, and so on). Still, tastes do differ, and I can see there are those who will find a fistful of brief articles annoyingly unsatisfying. For a cross-over book like mine the observation that some pieces are "little more than introductions" isn't necessarily a criticism, but nonetheless I note her point. It's a case of horses for courses, and the virtues of length will always be a matter of individual preference.

1. *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion* (Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

2. "Blake and Gender Studies," *Palgrave Advances in William Blake Studies*, ed. Nicholas M. Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 132-66.

More curious are Mellor's sharp personal criticisms, directed especially at my "unskilled editing." I am, self-confessedly, a novice, happy to learn as I go,<sup>3</sup> but with that acknowledged, I still find myself baffled that she concludes her assessment—which praises all the collection's academic work, some of it very highly (McClenahan "fascinating," Sturrock "brilliant," Wolfson "thoughtful," "subtle," even Bruder "substantive!")—with the damning judgment that my book is "deeply disappointing." Earlier, despite appreciative synopses, she finds "multiple problems" which "lie primarily with the editor." Given that I elicited and compiled all this valuable work, why such censure? The concluding paragraph is tougher and more perplexing still, as Mellor outlines her most serious criticism, namely that the book's contents suffer from their "lack of placement within an overall coherent argument concerning the state of feminist Blake studies at the present moment, the argument that the editor should have provided in her woefully inadequate introduction." As intended, this stings, but it also seems to be another instance of Mellor lambasting me for failing to hit a target I never aimed at. As I'm sure she knows, I've done more than most to chart and assess trends in feminist Blake studies. I clearly reference that scholarship in my introduction, and briefly locate the collection critically too, but as my title, "Introductory Note: 'look over the events of your own life . . .,'" makes patently clear, on this occasion I chose to open *my* book with some brief personal reflections. These chime very well, in fact, with the collection's many other "autobiographical memoirs" which, when springing from other sources, Mellor actually finds "charming." I guess, ultimately, that must be it: my origins and enthusiasms mean I lack the power to charm the reviewer? Certainly my lack of either the editorial or personal panache required to keep Mellor within the fold is deeply regrettable, for the article she withdrew partway through the project would doubtless have added something pungent and peerlessly distinctive.

3. I'm sure *Queer Blake* (forthcoming from Palgrave), which I am coediting with Tristanne J. Connolly, will show many signs of increased proficiency.

## Response to Helen P. Bruder

BY ANNE K. MELLOR

I HAVE my opinion of the value of Bruder's collection, already expressed, and she has hers. I don't disagree with anything she says; I just didn't find her method of organization—or goals for the volume—helpful. Readers of course should consult the volume itself and make up their own minds.