“Mrs Chetwynd & her Brother” and “Mr. Chetwynd”

Angus Whitehead

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that view further by creating the impression that an author is inherently obscure or too complex for many readers.

Admittedly, there is much that will intimidate and discom-bobulate in Blake, and so an assumption that the audience needs help may lead to some extremely valuable insights through explanation and other assistance, as frequently occurs in Stevenson's case. However, it also may lead to the exclusion of material that readers will never otherwise encounter—making Blake accessible by offering only what is easier to handle. I think seasoned Blakians (and especially editors) do a disservice to fellow travelers, even those only on the bunny slopes of Mont Blake, by directing them to "miss out" on complexity and possible confusion, by smoothing over every rough patch on the path, or by describing the author in ways that make him seem obscure and obtuse. Possibly influenced in instances such as these, readers might never want to return to Blake and deepen their study of his creations. Call me cruel, but I believe that young readers would benefit from a lot less hand-holding and a lot more exposure to ambiguity and complexity—accompanied by plenty of encouragement to be creative explorers in their studies. Let them each become the child in the "London" illustration, confidently leading a bent old man, rather than the child in the illustration for "The Little Boy Found," being led by some revered savior-like figure. "Unless ye become as little children ..."

Nevertheless, I believe Stevenson's labors shine brightly, most especially because their result serves as a sort of hub, convergence point, or intermediary for the many other means by which readers may come to Blake's writings: scholarly complete editions focused on providing a sound text, other selected editions of Blake heavily enriched by outside scholarship (such as the Norton critical edition [2nd ed., 2007] with its supplementary criticism), more general anthologies that include pieces by Blake, and purely interpretive critical works. Consequently, Blake: The Complete Poems does an admirable job of serving its intended audience. That primary audience is not the only one that can benefit from having both a reading text based on a reliable authority (Erdman) and the fullest body extant of commentary from a longtime Blake scholar (much fuller than Bloom's in the Erdman edition, for example). Seasoned critics, too, likely can use Stevenson's edition for an enjoyable read and, perhaps on occasion, a bit of assistance in their own writing. While Blake: The Complete Poems surely leaves more to be desired, even in its third instantiation, I feel that it manages largely to achieve the goals that the editor sets for it. It becomes even more remarkable by doing so in an attractive, affordable physical object in this age when presses are reducing their material output and electronic alternatives gain popularity—making it a book that should be saved at the end of the semester. Every reader should approach every edition, be it from a university library or a big-box bookstore, consciously and critically; Stevenson's is no exception. But I think that, under this editor's reliable eye, it serves as one of the more useful guides through the Blakean universe, and so we can praise Stevenson for undertaking that formidable task once again. Happy birthday, Mr. Blake.

MINUTE PARTICULAR

"M" Chetwynd & her Brother" and "M'. Chetwynd"

BY ANGUS WHITEHEAD

If, as Keri Davies suggests in a recent essay about Blake collector Rebekah Bliss, "every person who bought Blake's work in his lifetime is of significance to Blake scholarship," the identity of another contemporary female purchaser of the poet-artist's work, albeit on a smaller scale, merits closer investigation. William Blake twice refers to "M" Chetwynd. On 30 January 1803 Blake wrote from Felpham to his brother James at 28 Broad Street, Carnaby Market, "I send with this 5 Copies of N4 of the Ballads for M' Flaxman & Five more two of which you will be so good as to give to M" Chetwynd if she should call or send for them." According to G. E. Bentley, Jr., "Mrs Chetwynd took two copies of the fourth Ballad from James Blake ... and probably had the preceding numbers as well, eight in all (§1.0.0)." Eighteen months later, Mrs. Chetwynd, accompanied by her brother, called on Blake at his lodgings and studio at 17 South Molton Street. On 28 September 1804 Blake wrote to William Hayley:

I had the pleasure of a call from M" Chetwynd & her Brother. A Giant in body mild & polite in soul as I have in general found great bodies to be they were much pleased with Romneys Designs. M' C. sent to me the two articles for you & for the safety of which by the Coach I had some fears till M' [William] Meyer obligingly undertook to convey them safe ....

I wish to thank Keri Davies and Catherine Taylor for their assistance with this note.

2. E 727.

6. Stevenson's rhetoric is almost always mild in addressing Blake, but a few times he comes across as a bit sharp or judgmental. For example, "a strange poem, unsatisfactory in its lack of completeness, yet compelling in its dreamlike logic, in spite of its gruesome titlepage" (headnote to The Book of Los, 284).
Two recently published letters of the poet and novelist Charlotte Smith, to whom William Hayley had formerly acted as patron and supporter, throw further light on the identity of Mrs. Chetwynd, and suggest that by early 1801 she herself had become the object of Hayley’s affections.

In a letter to the Irish antiquary and acquaintance of Hayley’s, Joseph Cooper Walker, dated 14 April 1801, Smith observes,

It is now many months since I have heard of M’ Hayley otherwise than by common report, which says that he is going to be married to a M’ Chetwynd, the widow of a Gentleman who was killed in Ireland in the rebellion & who has five children, none of them quite children.5

On 7 October 1801, in a further letter to Walker, Smith writes, “You probably correspond with our old friend M’ Hayley and know the Lady of your Count’ry with whom he is as I understand soon to be united.” Although Hayley married neither Mrs. Chetwynd nor her eldest daughter, he was certainly in regular contact with Mrs. Chetwynd and her “orphan family” during the early 1800s. The editor of Smith’s correspondence, Judith Phillips Stanton, identifies Mrs. Chetwynd as “Penelope Carleton Chetwynd, daughter of John Carleton of Woodside, Co. Cork ….6” As noted by Hayley and Smith, she had recently been widowed. Stanton informs us that Penelope Chetwynd’s husband William Chetwynd (1754-98), “grandson of the third Viscount Chetwynd, was killed in action with the Irish rebels near Saintfield, Co. Down, 11 June 1798.”7

Crosby’s and Stanton’s information concerning Mrs. Chetwynd can be supplemented by other sources. The International Genealogical Index (IGI) reveals that Penelope Carleton was born near Cork about 1762. She married William Chetwynd, son and heir of Rev. Hon. John Chetwynd, Precentor of Cork, and Judith Piggott, at Cork on 30 May 1783.8 According to


On first becoming acquainted with Penelope Chetwynd and presumably her children, perhaps as early as September 1800, Blake probably learned from Hayley that the Chetwynd family comprised the widow and orphans of a celebrated military hero killed during the Irish insurrection of 1798.

G. E. Bentley, Jr., identifies Mrs. Chetwynd’s brother, described by Blake as “a Giant in body mild & polite in soul as I have in general found great bodies to be,” as the “M. Chetwynd” mentioned by the traveler and writer John Carr in a letter to Hayley dated 9 September 1801. Carr writes: “Pray remember me warmly to M. Chetwynd. he is a noble Youth—You & Blake

Trinity College, Cambridge, on 29 May 1769 (see John Venn, J. A. Venn, eds., Alumni Cantabrigiensis: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922-54] 2:25). Three years earlier Hayley had spent his final year as an undergraduate at Trinity (Alumni Cantabrigiensis 3:25; DNB). Chetwynd was admitted to Lincoln’s Inn on 24 June 1771, but at the beginning of October 1771 he migrated to Trinity College, Dublin, where he was awarded his BA in 1775 (Alumni Dublinenses [Dublin: A. Thom and Co., 1935] 148).


15. BR(2) 109; see also James King, William Blake, His Life (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson; New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991) 149. In the index to BR(2), John Carr’s reference to “M. Chetwynd” and Blake’s reference to Mrs. Chetwynd’s brother are listed under the heading George Chetwynd. A George Chetwynd revised Richard Burn’s The Justice of the Peace, and Parish Officer (1825), a work Bentley cites in a discussion of Blake’s entry ped of “not guilty” to the charge of sedition at the Michelmans Quarter Sessions, Ferworth, 4 October 1803 (BR(2) 170). See BR(2) 108-09, 857n117.

16. BR(2) 109. In suggesting that Hayley and Blake had “made a Coxcomb” of Chetwynd, Carr seems to be joking, perhaps alluding to both Blake’s and Hayley’s possibly over-generous praise of Mr. Chetwynd’s artistic efforts. Carr’s words may echo a passage in William Cowper’s letter to John Johnson, 23 March 1790, with which Hayley, Blake, and Carr would have been familiar from Hayley’s recent editing of Cowper’s correspondence: “If you should ever prove a coxcomb, from which character you stand just now at a greater distance than any young man I know, it shall never be said that I have made you one.” See William Cowper, The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper, ed. James King and Charles Ryskamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979-86) 3:363-65. In his journal for Friday, 26 June 1801, John Marsh wrote: “We drove to Felpham & drank tea with M. Hayley where we met M. Blake y artist & young M. Chetwynd ...” (BR(2) 108).

17. Conversely, Bentley may have assumed that Mrs. Chetwynd was single and that, in referring to her so, Blake was using the title “M’rs.” as an honorific applied to single women of sufficient age, rank, and wealth.

18. However, Blake’s reference to Mrs. Chetwynd’s brother as “mild & polite in soul as I have in general found great bodies to be” may just possibly refer to the eminent Cork clergyman Edward Mitchell Carleton.

19. See Alumni Dublinenses 134. His elder brothers graduated in 1789 and 1791 respectively.

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 Kearsey, in her Kearsey'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 ...." 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. 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. 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. Even more significantly, 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." 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." More recently, E. P. Thompson has suggested that a politically radical and dissenting Blake maintained a "conscious posture of hostility to ... polite culture." 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 C.," Hayley appears to have been looking out for Blake.

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 [street & 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).


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

UCH 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