

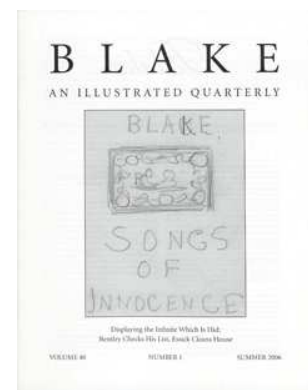
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P O E M

Eternity in Love

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Eternity in Love

BY DAVID BETTERIDGE

"Eternity is in love," the poet wrote, "in love with the productions of time." From his vantage point of filthy Thames and cruel streets, amid the shambles of an empire's hub and capital of greed, he looked, and all around he found his proof: eternity; eternity in love; in love with each and any flower, or grain of sand, or song, or chimney sweep.

We, when we hear the clamor, high in the frosty air, of wild geese flocking to their winter feeding grounds; when we hear the tiny crack of catkin, bud, or pod, ripening, opening, each in its due time; when, in a flood of sunshine, we see the silver flash of salmon curving in a hefty leap and plunge; when, amid the slow, far journeying of constellations, in the staccato of the Dog Star's signaling, we catch the quick red stab of its eye winking; then, and at all such moments when the fire of Nature self-reveals, we stop, must stop, and test the truth of Blake's wise apothegm.

In the cadences of poetry, of memory, of work, and in the silences to which they lead; in or after acts, however small or bold, of empathy or hope; on occasions when the news is heard that good, although as fragile as a snail or creeping tendril of convolvulus, has yet achieved a breakthrough from its crush of opposites; then, and always when some gleam of spirit's gold appears, we again, to test the truth, must stop.

In things contingent and ephemeral, or seeming so, there! eternity!
eternity in love!
in love beyond all waste and count of years!

R E M E M B R A N C E

Janet Adele Warner

14 February 1931-6 May 2006

It must have been predawn in Vancouver the morning of 7 May when Renée Warner, Janet's daughter, called me in Toronto to tell me of Janet's death the evening before. That night I was unable to sleep, thinking of all that Janet had meant to me over the more than forty years in which we had been friends. I decided to try and write down something about this friendship and her impact on my life, but I have found this to be an impossible task, for Janet was an enormous person, not in body, of course, but in spirit. And the world of the spirit is infinite.

I had spoken to Janet earlier in the week, from New York City on Tuesday 2 May, after the great William Blake sale at Sotheby's of the recently discovered watercolor drawings done by Blake two centuries earlier in illustration to Robert Blair's poem *The Grave*. The writings and the images of William Blake were what had brought Janet and myself together in 1964, in what I believe was Northrop Frye's final graduate course in William Blake. Frye was a magisterial thinker and a sweet man, but he was notoriously shy, so the overflowing room—in fact, a lecture theatre in Victoria College in the University of Toronto—in which he conducted his Blake seminar could never be a comfortable forum for his personality.

During our course with Frye, Janet became fascinated with the minute particulars of Blake's images, and she began to count tendrils in the vegetation which abounds in Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, and went on to study embroideries and other domestic artifacts, like transfer prints on china, as well as images on trade cards, and the most popular, even "humble" sources, in order to search for influences on Blake's art and design. At the time, her passion for this aspect of material culture was out of step with the prevailing approaches to Blake's art, which were highly symbolic, as evident not only in Frye's work, but also in that of Kathleen Raine, and many other critics and scholars. But, as in many aspects of life, Janet was ahead of her time, and the book which she eventually published, *Blake and the Language of Art* (1984), in its investigation of popular culture, was in the vanguard of current critical approaches.

Shortly after I met her, Janet told me she wanted to write a novel about Blake's wife, Catherine Boucher. I thought this was one of those throwaway remarks that people make, since I find that many people imagine themselves writing novels. After graduate school, Janet became a professor at the recently established York University in Toronto, where she remained until her early retirement. She published numerous articles, and was a productive scholar. When she and her husband John retired to the west coast of Canada to pursue their passion for