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# 1

## ‘The Bread of sweet Thought & the Wine of Delight’: Gender, Aesthetics and Blake’s ‘dear Friend Mrs Anna Flaxman’ (E 709)

*Helen P. Bruder*

Just before the Blakes left London, on their only significant trip together, they took the unusual step of collaboratively producing a letter to Ann Flaxman. Catherine provided the prose,<sup>1</sup> William the verse (a flavour of which is given above). It’s a noteworthy epistle, not least because Catherine emerges from it as an image-maker in her own right – conjuring a picture of London as ‘the terrible desert’ (sic) and encapsulating their journey as an airy ‘migration the Swallows call us fleeting past our window’ (E 708). It is unique, too, because it contains Catherine’s only textual account of a companionable moment from the Blakes’ long life together, ‘O how we delight in talking of the pleasure we shall have in preparing you a summer bower’ (E 708). William Blake happily discussing holiday laundry with his wife: it’s not an image of the artist we’re used to considering these days, but it will be my argument that just as Catherine’s homely vignette revealed for Ann the currently neglected domestic Blake, so the artistic gems William produced for Ann’s enjoyment reveal the ease he felt with aesthetic forms which (like bedmaking) have habitually been gendered feminine. Obviously the clearest evidence for this potentially far-reaching argument are those 116 exquisite watercolour ‘Drawings’ (Spring.1) – designed, in the words of their original recipient, to illuminate the poems of Thomas Gray, which despite their sublime themes are extraordinarily beautiful – and the verses for Ann with which Blake enwrapped them.<sup>2</sup>

These designs are arguably the most delightful of all Blake’s works and those unfamiliar with his symbols, preoccupations and contexts can readily enjoy them. Initially it seemed that critics too might be enthusiastic: when the first widely available facsimile appeared Geoffrey Keynes (1971) hailed it as the Blake Trust’s ‘most important publication’ (viii). The designs were proudly shown to the public in both the UK (Tate) and USA (Yale). Those who subsequently devoted themselves to consolidating Blake’s canonical and institutional status, however, had little time for his *Gray* and it’s my

aim to explore the ways in which this is connected to its feminine status as a private entertainment, commissioned on modest terms by a friend, and designed specifically to please the tastes of (to quote one contemporary) an 'amiable and accomplished . . . a most cheerful intelligent woman'.<sup>3</sup> Ann Flaxman was also a highly reflexive scholar, and one comment she makes about the motivation behind her desire to 'gain a knowledge of the Arts & a power of describing what I see of them' is illuminating, for the wish that her memorandums express with justice 'the Love I have for them & the Pleasure I receive in viewing those that are truly fine' (24.b)<sup>4</sup> is central to an understanding of feminine aesthetics. The axiomatic role of attraction and affection; the desire to share artistic impulses, driven by aesthetic pleasure and the intimation that fine appreciation can foster sociability are quintessentially feminine convictions; moreover, it helps to keep a sense of these gendered aesthetics in mind when we begin to consider the trouble caused for critics by the intimate lines of verse (Inscription and Dedication) with which Blake topped and tailed the collection:

Around the Springs of Gray my wild root weaves  
Traveller repose & Dream among my leaves.

Will. Blake (Spring.2)

To Mrs Ann Flaxman

A Little Flower grew in a lonely vale  
Its form was lovely but its colours. pale  
One standing in the Porches of the Sun  
When his Meridian Glories were begun  
Leapd from the steps of fire & on the grass  
Alighted where this little flower was  
With hands divine he movd the gentle Sod  
And took the Flower up in its native Clod  
Then planting it upon a Mountains brow  
'Tis your own fault if you dont flourish now

William Blake (Elegy.12)

I will explore Blake's vivid personifications later, but what must first be noted is the beguiling tone of 'Will's' poetic invitation and his warm wish to make playful, amusing contact. All in all these lines lack poetic sobriety, let alone prophetic grandeur, and clearly ill fit the work they frame for inclusion into masterful narratives of Blake's vision – which begins to explain his *Gray's* critical neglect. The only grandee of Blake studies to give it sustained attention, Keynes (1971), actually attempted to classify the Inscription as 'impersonal' (4) but his comments on the Dedication introduce what became a common strategy: conceding intimacy while simulta-

neously shifting Blake's motivation from the giving of feminine pleasure to the dispensing of masculine instruction. He finds, 'the spirit of Blake's creative powers introducing Ann Flaxman's delicate perceptions to a greater appreciation of poetry and design on the mountain of the double genius of Blake and Gray' (5). Some may see more scurrilous meanings gather around such twin peaks but a joyless, schoolmasterly precedent was thus set and though Irene Tayler's landmark study (1971) made its educational comments mildly (161), the other major treatment of Blake's *Gray* argues for a most alarming form of manly didacticism. Frank Vaughan (1996) presents an artist irritably frustrated by 'Nancy's slowness or resistance to learn from William Blake' (17). His appellations are revealing (Nancy being an affectionate name used only by intimates) but what I take serious issue with is the material Vaughan chooses as 'evidence' to advance his case, for the letters Ann Flaxman wrote to friends in praise of Blake's *Night Thoughts* designs and in anticipation of his *Gray* (16 March 1796–November 1797) should be treasured as rare and insightful contemporary celebrations of Blake's talents.<sup>5</sup> Vaughan, though, claims they reveal that she was 'puzzled' and 'coped by incorporating him into the stereotypic image of the wild, natural genius' – for her, he alleges, Blake was 'rudely or arbitrarily inspired' (16). Peter Ackroyd (1995) also besmirched Ann's perceptions, claiming she 'overlooked' Blake's 'real genius' to 'characterise' him in 'conventionally sentimental terms' (204). The ignorance these assertions reveal about the depth of William and Ann's relationship and about the profundity of her interest in art and inspiration will soon become clear, but what must be strongly contested from the outset is their distortion of her artistic assessment, for though pitifully few of his peers were willing to prize Blake's 'Strong & Singular Imagination' (1797) or joy in him as one 'whose genius soars above all rule' (1796) without raising some doubts about his sanity, Ann Flaxman was, unequivocally, and attention to her unique significance is long overdue.

Not all critics, of course, contend that Blake felt anger towards the 'passive, orthodox . . . feminine mind' (106) that Vaughan believes she represented. By contrast G.E. Bentley (2001) finds a cordially 'tactful compliment' peeping through the Dedication (177). What remains baffling, though, is the notion that shared floral allusions imply William is responding to Ann's epistolary description of his genius, which is surely impossible since the letters which conveyed it were personal correspondence, one of which never even reached its addressee, let alone a third party like Blake. Which is not to say that Ann Flaxman's many other, less private, writings had no role in the genesis of Blake's *Gray*, or are irrelevant in our interpretations. Quite the contrary, for her essays, notes, correspondence, memorandums, notebooks and (especially) travel journals are a precious store which has been passed over by generations of scholars.<sup>6</sup> The literary output of less significant male associates has of course been repeatedly trawled and though I

have insufficient space fully to illustrate my polemic, it is undoubtedly true that her neglected writings have a unique power to dispel the perplexed sexism which has gathered around *Gray's* personal, and arguably feminised, Inscription and Dedication.

Of especial relevance is the opening section of Ann Flaxman's *Journey to Rome*, written during the Flaxmans' stay on the continent (1787–94), which describes their eventful trip in witty and arresting detail. It remains unpublished, but was designed to be circulated and to appeal to 'the partiality of those friends into whose hands it may fall' (1). Hands like Blake's? As the volume started doing its rounds William and Ann had been acquainted for over ten years and during the Flaxmans' stay abroad he was undoubtedly in her thoughts, for example when William's birthday approached, Ann asked her sister-in-law for news of him (20/11/1793).<sup>7</sup> One can reasonably speculate that Blake was amongst the friends sorely missed by the Flaxmans, for the decade after their return was one of unprecedented closeness. The spaciousness of the Blakes' Lambeth house and garden enabled easeful entertaining – which we know the Flaxmans enjoyed – and this period (1794–1805) saw the production by Blake not only of feminine private work such as *Gray*, but of collaboration on womanly public works too: in 1799, for example, Blake engraved a gargantuan Britannia for Flaxman's Naval Pillar.<sup>8</sup> These were also the years of his most intense patronage by John and Ann's close friend William Hayley, which included engraving work for an edition of his 'Ladys book', *The Triumphs of Temper* (1803), after 'New Original Designs' by Maria Flaxman, and for another volume with feminine appeal, Hayley's milky and tearful, *Ballads . . . Founded on Anecdotes Relating to Animals* (1802).<sup>9</sup> This was sometimes a stormy decade too but pleasure in the company of the female-enriched Flaxman family remained a constant. Blake, for example, especially notes their 'kind affection' after his acquittal for treason (14/1/1804, E 740) and, tellingly, when piqued that John hasn't 'had the time or grace to call on me' we hear nonetheless that 'Mrs Flaxman & her Sisters' had visited and continually encouraged his artistic labours (23/2/1804, 18/12/1804, E 742, 758). As Blake put it, a grievance with her husband was one thing but 'Should that make a difference betwixt me & Thee' (E 507)? The answer was evidently no and if affections are taken seriously, and the women in Blake's milieu treated as more than wifely emanations, it is clear that the Inscription's invitation 'to repose & Dream' is addressed to one, very literal, 'Traveller': the friend Blake described as 'a good connoisseur in engraving' (E 758), Ann Flaxman, recently returned from Italy – Blake's 'Envied Storehouse of Intellectual Riches' (E 581) – with a sheaf of impressions to share.

His saucy invitation, then, to dreamy slumber is especially tantalising, both because it gestures towards the cheeky sensuality which infuses the *Gray* designs and because it implies that Blake was familiar with the references to recumbent pleasure which pepper the opening pages of Ann's *Journey*. Very early, when the Flaxmans were still in France, she sighs 'in

the midst of the Garden we were lull'd to sleep by the murmuring of the Cascades & when we wak'd we were delighted with the surrounding View' (5.b) and, again, after a delicious night spent under 'silk hangings' in Florence, 'we slept that night in Paradise' (29.b). Just ripples of connection? Certainly, but if their relationship is valued, many more become apparent, especially if we jettison that dogmatic seriousness. As we've seen, it conjures a gendered judgmentalism between them which female critics have long been wary of. Years ago Margaret Ruth Lowery (1949) illuminated the 'happy friendship' (289) the pair enjoyed – it starts, for heaven's sake, with Ann's exuberant 'I rejoice for Blake' (1783) and as it closes she's still (1816) prepared to 'put up with' her friend's 'odd humours'<sup>10</sup> – and part of its vibrancy derives from sociability and a sense of fun. I know laughter isn't encouraged in Blake studies but these are, as Mona Wilson noted even earlier (1927), 'more humorous than any of Blake's other work' (97) so it is frankly unavoidable here – not least because Ann's journal, described with light self-mockery as 'an Uninteresting Detail of a journey to Rome' (1), is a hoot and the same archly feminine spirit animates Blake's Dedication to its author.

Comedy, though sniffed at, is *the* interpretative key, and the associated volume which gives the best clue to how we should read Blake's lines is John Flaxman's illustrated poem, *The Knight of the Blazing Cross* which he gave to his wife on her birthday as a token of 'Fifteen Happy Years passed in Your Society' (29).<sup>11</sup> In 1796 Ann received Flaxman's *Knight*; in 1797, Blake's *Gray*. Much could be said about Flaxman's charming book, which well demonstrates Cunningham's gendered aesthetic reminder, 'Though master of its purest lines, he was still more the sculptor of sentiment than of form . . . in household or domestic things Flaxman shone unrivalled'<sup>12</sup>; but for now I'll hone in on *The Knight's* provocative, at times cartoonish, personifications. As a boy John strode through the parks of London, faux sword in hand, eyes vigilant for distressed damsels. This image became a family joke, and years later we find him both invoking and deflating masculine heroism – for while there are straight depictions of the Knight undergoing 'trials of Virtue' (29) his stride and horsemanship become burlesque (37), while his breastplate morphs into a pair of stunning, Madonnasque, nipples (59, 63). These sketches were 'produced at Your desire' (29) and it is easy to see Ann's feminising tastes emerging in *The Knight's* giggly undercurrents. Its females are equally slippery. Ostensibly emblems of vulnerability and temptation, or chaste representatives of heavenly assistance and reward (55–7), the most arresting design, nonetheless, is an elaborate ascending pyramid of naked, serpentine women: the 'Blue-eyed Sisters of the deep' who 'pouring out their watery treasure/Perform thy will' (65).

*The Knight* betokens an enviably complex union, but what's most revealing in the context of Blake's Dedication to *Gray* is Flaxman's ready use of hyperbolic and humorous self-representation, and his playful deployment of sexy and sexual stereotypes. The social currency of such images (John's

half-sister Mary Ann, for example, pictures in poetry her brother using 'Minerva's Casque, to make his stews'<sup>13</sup>) – in fact unlocks Blake's otherwise bizarre depiction of the diffident John as a fiery figure 'standing in the Porches of the Sun' and the equally dissonant portrait of the cosmopolitan Ann as 'A little Flower . . . in a lonely Vale'. By the late 1790s Blake and his friends were close enough to indulge in this kind of coy, referential fun and, importantly, seem happy, like so many of their female poetic peers, for art to be an instrument of convivial communication and personalised entertainment: this is occasional verse. Arguably Blake takes the gender joke a shade further, straining the active male/passive female opposition beyond credence (as he so often does) but what is of most interest is the feminised function and flavour of Blake's lines, and the fact that he makes an allusion to the Flaxmans' continental trip within this comic context. The arduous journey catalogued by Ann figures here as the leaping John's swift removal of his little flower to the giddy height of a 'Mountains brow' – an ironic allusion which is intriguing because it strongly suggests that Blake knew of and enjoyed her wonderfully amusing account of the pair's sexually segregated travails over some formidable foreign peaks. Ann Flaxman's lengthy Alpine interlude is an engaging and eloquent mix of fashionable picturesque aesthetics, genuinely delighted appreciation of the sublime scenery – 'Rocks whose Summits reach'd the Clouds' (18.b) – and potted local history, which has echoes throughout Blake's *Gray*, where landscape is given unusual significance. What evidently most amused Blake, though, is her account of the females' assisted passage over Mount Denis (first on ornamented mules, then in a rustic sedan) while the men soldiered over on foot – and paid for it later, waking she says with 'Legs of Lead' (21). Space prevents adequate quotation, but a quintessential and tonal connection is easily established: 'in this manner were we convey'd . . . by two chairmen who no doubt found our weight more than our worth; It cost *us* a deal of Mirth, & *them* a deal of Labour' (20). So this is how Flaxman's 'Flower' fared when lifted from her 'native Clod', and given this web of jovial allusions Blake's concluding sentiment – "'Tis your own fault if you don't flourish now' – isn't a mannish jibe but rather an arch jest. I suspect William knew first-hand how well Ann flourished on her *Journey to Rome* and I'll conclude by suggesting a few ways in which the *Gray* designs speak both to and of the writer and her travels.

A generic tribute is present, I think, in the female scribes which Blake includes (with book in Adversity.4 and scroll in Poesy.2), in the potent energy (Poesy.12) and wrapt contemplation (Spring.4) of his muses, and in the expressive power gifted to other literary women, like the 'mighty mother' who beams over Ann Flaxman's favourite, Shakespeare (Poesy.9). The feminised art-form with a more direct connection, though, is music – Ann's passion. The first two pages of her *Journey* contain three references to her voice – 'my Talent for singing . . . was my best Friend' (2) – and it is

possible that this melody-maker's features are sketched upon the face of the elegant woman, with lyre, who dominates 'The Progress of Poesy' (Poesy.3). Other elaborations extend the compliment: there is no textual precedent for the decorative songbird (Music.2), scarcely more for the trumpeting females who represent fame (Music.1 / 10), nor for the luminescent band who, with flutes and tabors, seem to emblematised (Poesy.5) one of Ann's theoretical contentions about musical sound.<sup>14</sup> The few critics who have considered the designs tend to hail their heroic bards, but it is worth noting that Blake's artistic females are accompanied by less heroic male poets too: Gray himself is a hunched figure, orthopaedically so by the end (Elegy.1); the penman of 'A Long Story' a begowned effete, who scares children & farmyard animals (.6) and must submit to womanly judgement (.10 / 11) and Blake also subjects himself to a female epitaph writer: 'DOST THOU ART' her finger reminds him (Elegy.8). Images likely to resonate with a woman who spent much time amongst (visionary) artists?

Other designs speak of Ann Flaxman's directly expressed aesthetic tastes. One striking theme in her memorandums is the pleasure derived from the contemplation of male bodies: among the 'very fine Casts' at the Academy in Milan Ann selects, 'a fawn snapping his fingers & a sitting Mercury, this last is exquisitely beautiful' (25); at the Palazzo Sampieri, Bologna 'my favourites were a douce of beautiful Boys by Albani' (28); in the Duke's Gallery, Florence she remembers 'with satisfaction a drunken or rather a muddled fawn' and a Bacchanalian 'Group', and from a further chamber 'a Ganymede restor'd by Cellini & a beautiful Cupid'. Evidently 'the Cabinet de l'amour' (33) was delightful and Ann Flaxman's linguistic choices are significant, for her repeated description of these figures as beautiful represents a requisitioning of a firmly gendered aesthetic concept in the service of her heterosexual female gaze – an act of possession Blake gladly accepted and indeed extravagantly indulged across his *Gray*. To many eyes, including I suspect their original recipient's (who mused over their being 'wantonly shewn to anybody'<sup>15</sup>) it offers a pageant of male allurements. Launched by a peek-a-boo portrait of erectile splendour (Spring.1) this flight of feminine fancy takes in: eager naked youths (Spring.3 / 6); rough (Poesy.7) and soft (Eton. 1/2/3/5/9/10) boys – some caught at toilette (Odin.7) or sportively unclad (Eton.4); a winsome cupid among girls (Poesy.5) plus a stagemusical show of costumed lovelies: a moody moonlit scholar (Music.5), soulful (Elegy.2 / 9 / 10) and frock-coated (Story. 10 / 11) poets, heart-torn widowers (Bard.10 / Epitaph.2), a trio of huge-handed labourers, worthy of D.H. Lawrence (Elegy.5 / 6 / 7), a table of affectionate conversationalists (Owen.2) and last but not least a stable of dashing knights and nobles (the most chisel-jawed: Adversity.3 / Sisters.10 / Odin.3 / 4 / 9). Ann noted that Venetian 'Ladies of Quality . . . form little evening parties to sup on men'.<sup>16</sup> William, it seems, gladly fed such appetites.

A feminine sensibility is also evident in the designs' curiously detailed interiors. On leaving England Ann sadly bid 'Farewell now to Comfortable Parlours' (3.b), examples of which William sketches for her – complete with birdcage (Story.7), card table (Story.12) and ornate fireplace (Epitaph.2). She also gave a feminine twist to gendered architecture, describing the Gothic steeple of Milan cathedral as 'so very light & Elegant' (24.b) – a revisionary strategy repeated by Blake through the whimsical work of 'fairy hands' on the severe vaulted arches of 'An Ancient Pile' (Story.3). The two similarly share an enthusiasm for fabrics and fashion. Ann's was both technical (noting with interest silk manufacture at Lyon (17.b) and 'how exact they die their Worsted' (13) at Gobelins) and aesthetic. Indeed European fashion is one of her major themes: from the finery of coachmen in Milan (25.b), to the 'chip hats' (26) worn by peasants in Parma (see *Elegy.5*), through the class divisions of dress in Florence (31) – a city which provoked unusually fierce comment, 'the Ladies of Fashion are furious to imitate the English fashions but as the English all pass through France . . . & of Course get themselves Frenchified, the Florentines can never get at the true English mode' (35). If only there were time to pursue the politics of dress and Blake's sensitive rendering of inflected style, but it is valuable just to note the four, somewhat incongruous, sartorial shifts of his *Fatal Sisters*<sup>17</sup> (.1 / 5 / 7+8 / 9) and the loving detail apparent in 'A Long Story' – both in the astonishing millinery of the female jury (.10 / 11) and in the couture donned (.5 / 7 / 8) by that 'brace . . . rustling in their silks and tissues' (66).

These are revelations to those schooled in the 'Intense! naked!' (E 53) Blake of critical masculinism and it is fitting to close with a vivid variant of the other, domestic, Blake ushered in by an indisputably feminine art form, purveyed by Flaxman's employer Wedgwood:<sup>18</sup> decorative ceramics. The vase in which the catwoman Selima drowns in 'Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat' is an example of modish chinoiserie (.3) which proved popular with female consumers; though the poem's moral is pettishly chauvinistic: lest reminded 'Nor all that glisters, gold' (52) women's venially capricious appetites will, like any housecat's lust for fish, prove fatal. Blake had little truck with stereotypes of feline femininity – with his most catty female also being his most externally constrained (.1): her laced bodice is tight, her neck-tied shawl equally binding. What perhaps animates these wonderful designs is an intimation that woman are victims of such notions (.5) who can nonetheless see beyond the fluffy ruffles imposed upon them to the human form beneath (.3). And Blake's play with ideas about felines, females and liberation is given delicious bite when we consider it alongside Ann Flaxman's passionate account of the captive cats she saw at Versailles. The palace, with its 'filthy' rooms and smelly sausage stalls (10), is briskly passed through but she dwells at length on the fate of the 'fine Persian cats' (see *Cat.2*) who 'were for Man's Caprice depriv'd of Nature's right' (10.b). The confinement of the other animals is less distressing but 'poor Puss',

caged amid her prey, appears 'like Tantalus . . . prevented from gratifying what the strongest temptations are constantly exciting' (11). Ann's cat craves pheasant; William's fish. But both are unfairly trapped and this scintillating link is tightened when we see how his designs apparently answer her protests. Hearing the cat's pitiful mewing, Ann concludes, 'she Sighs for Liberty' (10.b), whereupon William diverges from Gray's verse to give his catwoman a ninth life<sup>19</sup> in which to obtain her freedom: there can be no better portrait of orgasmic relief than the open-mouthed female sighing above the waves in the poem's final illumination (.6).

This chapter is just a volley in my campaign to establish Ann Flaxman's significance, but I hope it has shown how lamentable it is that the *Gray* watercolours haven't stood alongside Blake's *Night Thoughts* designs and *The Four Zoas* as, in all senses, big works, fundamental to our appreciation of the transitional Blake. And, additionally, that this can in part be accounted for by masculinist assumptions and constructions of the artist which gloss over his feminine (and camp) enthusiasms, while denying women any positive formative role in the development of Blake's aesthetic values. Viewing Blake's artistic circles Robert Essick (1991), for example, sees only female competitors or feminine corruption. Should any doubts remain, why not consider this question. If there had been a long-standing male friend of Blake who had weighed, while in Italy, the comparative merits of Florentine and Venetian art (calling 'St Marks . . . bad Gothic'<sup>20</sup>), and who had written detailed accounts of the artists Blake railed against (including that 'soft and effeminate demon' (E 548) Correggio), and who had 'felt' himself 'quite in M. Angelo's opinion when I view'd . . . the gates of Paradise' (32) while touring the Duomo in Florence, and who had a passion for Christian art, comparative religion and the writings of Dante, *and* who was in the unique position of receiving over one hundred personally tailored poetic illuminations would – (deep breath) – 'his' fascinating corpus have remained unstudied for so long? There's only one truthful answer. William named Ann a 'scholar' (E 740). He conveyed 'Italian Letters' (E 742) on her behalf to William Hayley. John said of his wife, 'She is my Dictionary'.<sup>21</sup> Surely the consultative role Ann Flaxman played in Blake's artistic thinking must be explored? Some may not be comfortable pondering the opinions of a contemporary who likened Blake's works to jewels and flowers ('the meadows queen' indeed) but anxious gender prejudice should not eclipse the perceptions of a woman who, unlike any of those men who have doubted her, actually knew the artist for over thirty years.

## Notes

1. Gilchrist finds the letter 'characteristic . . . of Blake' and decides 'the husband is obviously the author' (126). Actually the tone, syntax and imagery of the prose are strikingly atypical.

2. All *Gray* and Gray quotations and references, verbal and visual, are from Taylor, short titles and accompanying picture numbers also refer to this volume. The work is now available in electronic form at BA.
3. Cunningham, Vol. III, 290, 351.
4. Ann Flaxman quotations come from her unpublished *Journal to Rome* or *Journey to Rome* (both titles are in ink on the cover) BL. Add. 39, 787 unless otherwise stated.
5. BL. Add. 39, 780, f. 212 (1796), BL. Add. 39, 790, f. 3–4 (1797) and reproduced in *Blake Records* (1796) 69, (1797) 80.
6. The only substantial treatment is Stevens's, "'Putting to rights . . .'".
7. BL. Add. 39, 780, ff. 61–62; 62b.
8. Ann's sister Maria Denman told Gilchrist, 'As a girl she had . . . revered Blake' during family visits to Hercules Buildings, Lambeth; she 'observed . . . with some emotion "One remembers, even in age, the kindness of such a man"', (307, 323). Critics quickly noted this 'woman large enough to graze a couple of goats in her lap', quoted by Cunningham (323).
9. Hayley's classification in letter to John Flaxman (7 August 1803) in *Blake Records*, 157. Blake tells his brother James (30 January 1803) that he is sending '5 copies of N4 of the Ballads for Mrs Flaxman' and two more for 'Mrs Chetwynd' (E 727).
10. In letters to her husband: BL. Add. 39, 780, f. 157 (early 1780s); f. 364, 364b (July 1816).
11. Reproduction of *The Knight in Flaxman, Blake, Coleridge . . .* (27–73). Subsequent references are to this edition.
12. Cunningham (362, 319). See too his account of *Knight* (312–20) and of Flaxman's other invention, *The Casket* (332–7).
13. BL. Add. 39, 789, f. 116.
14. Her 'Essay on the Arts Commonly Call'd Imitative' distinguishes 'Common sound' from 'Musical sound', the latter is 'like a Circle which is an intire [sic] figure though it is generated by a multitude of Points flowing, at equal distances round a Common Centre', BL. Add. 39, 790, ff. 113–18; 115–16b. Blake's poem for Ann is 'a song to you' (E 708). Another huge, unexplored, affinity.
15. Letter to her husband, BL. Add. 39, 780, f. 263 (September 1805). Uncharacteristically Ann was loath to loan Blake's *Gray* to a sick (male) friend, keen to collect his artwork.
16. BL. Add. 39, 790, 162.
17. Gray's Preface describes 'twelve gigantic figures resembling women' (110). Blake opts for 'Three Fatal Sisters' (Bard.4). Ann's closeness to her sister Maria and sister-in-law, Mary Ann (both artists) produced many contemporary references to a sisterly trio. It may (also?) inform Blake's moony triple state, Beulah and other conceptions of 'Three-fold Wonder: feminine: most beautiful' (E 224).
18. Wedgwood was Flaxman's main employer, 1773–87. Wedgwood's cash and contacts – along with Ann's resolution 'we must work and economise' – made their Rome trip possible (Smiles, 195–227, 204). During this period Blake forged his friendship with the Flaxmans and themes which John treated for Wedgwood – such as (1782) *Blind Man's Buff* (211) – reappear (1783) in Blake's *Poetical Sketches* (E 421–3). There is not enough space here to discuss womens' roles in the production of that volume but Blake's female patrons, from Harriet Mathew to the Countess of Egremont (E 552–66), warrant consideration.
19. Gray 'Eight times . . . She mew'd to ev'ry wat'ry God' (51), Blake 'Nine times' (Cat.2).

20. BL. Add. 39, 790, 159b.  
21. Cunningham (352).

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