Geoffrey Keynes, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: A reproduction, with introduction and commentary

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explicate the title page to the first Night; also against assuming Blake's "iconographic consistency" (p. xiii). How would the editors explain the cup held by the child about to be cut down by Time, on page 26? Such a cup is often associated in Blake with bacchic figures and with the Scarlet Whore. Hence, it is ordinarily a sinister icon. Odd that it appears in the hands of a child. It is true that the editors express a mild reservation about "iconographic consistency" (p. viii), but the assumption should be that Blake adapted his images to his context.

The editors commendable compression of iconographic material has led to small omissions and overstatements. The design, on page 90, of Christ touching an "afflicted" man is said to be "almost identical" to the frontispiece for Blake's There Is No Natural Religion, second series, and to those two figures in the lower right corner of "The Divine Image" in Songs of Innocence. The "same basic motif" is pointed out in "The Chimney Sweeper" in Innocence. Yet, among those designs the editors should have drawn an important distinction. In "The Chimney Sweeper" and the Night Thoughts designs the two figures touch; in "The Divine Image" and There Is No Natural Religion they do not. Hence, while all four designs share the theme of resurrection, in only two is there a touch which humanizes the action.

The process of iconographic selection is always complex. Very rarely in this edition does that selection appear indelicate. It does seem significant, however, that the "spiritual presences," "Angels," on page 93, are wingless. In the Night Thoughts Blake often uses winged creatures for ascension, and wingless beings for visitations.

I think that it is more often in the designs with clear Biblical referents (particularly pages [43], 72, 80, 88) that the editors' interpretations seem to demand the reader's critical attention. On the title page for the third Night, the woman clothed in the sun is pregnant. Through her pregnancy she may escape the endless revolutions of time, turn time to eternity. (Nonetheless, the verso in the water colors shows her even more a prisoner.) On page 88, where Jacob wrestles with an "angel," it is the equality of man and God that Blake seems to stress, an equality quite consistent with the Biblical account and with Blake's emphasis throughout the Night Thoughts. (It's an emphasis which also shows Blake's preparedness for the Bible illustrations done for Butts.)

Can we offer an overall interpretation for the Night Thoughts engravings? The editors don't suggest one, though many of their comments are interpretative. The repetition of images and of the figures of Death, Time, and Christ do unify the designs and suggest, as Fuseli wrote of Blake's designs for Blair's Grave, that they "form of themselves a most interesting Poem." With one exception all of the Christ images appear in the fourth Night. Thus, the grouping of the figures suggests a progression from the world of Time and Death to a world informed by Christ—a progression in keeping with the movement of the poem.

Since the Dover edition is for the general reader, its annotated bibliography is quite properly short. It is short as well because there's been little work done on the Night Thoughts. The major studies are listed, though some interesting brief mentions of the Night Thoughts, such as John Grant's in Blake Newsletter 13, pp. 23-24, are omitted. The first entry in the chronological bibliography is out of order. If the editors wish to consider Thomas Edwards as their first entry, his name should be listed, along with the titles of his catalogues. I must quarrel as well with the fifth entry, which dismisses Adeline Butterworth's William Blake, Mystic. Butterworth was, after all, the first to reproduce both the engravings and the full text of the first two Nights. Her reproductions of the engravings are by no means "poor-quality"; the paper stock on which they are printed is superior to that of the Dover edition.

Despite its minor failings, many of them deriving, as I have suggested, from compression and the exigencies of commercial printing, Essick and La Belle have performed a service for students of Blake. Like Robespierre, we can all go to the guillotine with the Night Thoughts, now "embellished by the pencil of Blake," in our pockets.


Reviewed by John Beer

This new edition of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, issued as it is at a reasonable price, marks an important step in making Blake's work available to the ordinary reader in the form in which he meant it to be seen. For the Blake specialist who already has access to existing facsimiles through a good library it will serve a further important purpose. In recent years it has become clear that a new dimension of Blake's work opens when one looks at the various copies which he executed throughout his life, since almost all of them show interesting variations from one another. It is in some ways a subsidiary enterprise, since there is no evidence that these various executions betray any fundamental change of mind about a book, once constructed, but they can still give evidence of the continuing processes of his mind: the themes which he may now wish to emphasize by rearrangement, by the insertion of an additional plate or plates, or by the different perspectives on a text which can be given through the choice of different colors or the emphasis on particular visual motifs.

The pioneers in this enterprise have been David Erdman and his associates, who have described such variations in detail, but there is a limit to what an individual scholar can do, particularly when, as must often happen, he is forced to carry some differences in his head from one copy to another. It is even more difficult to convey them to other readers
through the printed description. The slide lecture
(as David Erdman has found) is often the best way of
communicating such discoveries.

The publication of this edition marks an impor-
tant step in remedying this situation, since the
copy it reproduces, copy I (Keynes-Wolf) in the
Trianon Press facsimile, since the Fitzwilliam, for
understandable reasons, has been unwilling to send its
copies to Paris for the dismantling which would be
inevitable under that process.) As a result of this
initiative, a scholar anywhere in the world now has
the chance of comparing three versions: this one;
copy H (Keynes-Wolf) in the Fitzwilliam (reproduced
in Max Ploewman's 1927 facsimile); and the Rosenwald
copy, reproduced in the Trianon Press facsimile. No
printed description can reproduce the experience of
comparing say, the slightly sombre effect of copy H,
with its cavernous enclosures here and there, and the
brighter, rainbow effect of copy I.

The new edition is reproduced with an introduc-
tion, a reading text and an arrangement of the
reproduction so that two pages of reproduction are
regularly interspersed with two of commentary,
allowing the plates to appear facing one another as
in the original. This is the most satisfactory way
of reproducing within the traditional book format,
though it might be worthwhile to experiment with an
arrangement which would make it possible for pages
of interpretation to be pulled out beyond the plates
and so to be read side by side with the open text.

The commentary, as we have come to expect from
Sir Geoffrey Keynes, is uncluttered, clear and very
much to the point. He wastes little time over previ-
ous interpretations, with the important exception of
David Erdman's 1973 essay on the interlinear draw-
ing. He is, indeed, brisk to the point of being almost cav-
aller with his predecessors: of the two books he does
mention, Erdman's
The Interpretation of The Four Zoas
is given only the second part of its title, together with
a date which is that of the second, revised edition ,
but no mention being made of the first, while Sabri-Ta-
brizi is turned into Fabri-Tabrizi.

The problem with any running commentary on Blake
is that it cannot give the reader the initial bearings
that he needs before entering the world of the
prophetic books. Simple identifications of Blake's
personages with human qualities or physical functions
will not normally do unless the reader has some
grasp of the larger pattern of what is going on. I
do not think there is a simple answer to this problem:
each reader has to match readings of the larger
interpretations against scrutiny of the text itself
until he finds a reading that works for him. So far as
running commentary is possible, however, this one
is good. Some important points are missed out: the
reader will not learn anywhere that the Memorable
Fancies are satirical versions of Swedenborg's
Memorable Relations, for example. Some of the
identifications strike one as over-simplistic: to
see Rtnirrah simply as "Wrath," for instance, is to
suggest a kind of crude animism which is not charac-
teristic of Blake's work. I am also unhappy with
references to "materialism" and "the spiritual" in
commentaries on Blake, for when run together they
suggest adherence to a dichotomy between the material
and the spiritual which was foreign to his purposes.
When, for example, the illustrations are illustrated at the head of
plate II, showing various figures of land and sea, is
described as "nature in its spiritual forms," I find
it more natural to refer to the text immediately
beneath ("The Ancient Poets animated all sensible
objects with Gods or Geniuses," etc.) which it seems
to be illustrating very closely. Blake's spirits
interpenetrate the material to an extraordinary and
unaccustomed degree, drastically changing the meaning
of the word "spiritual" from conventional usage.

One or two other disagreements may be briefly
noted. Keynes interprets "Now is the dominion of
Edom and the return of Adam into Paradise" as meaning
that Adam has already returned into Paradise; I would
read it more in the Biblical form which would suggest
"Now is the time for . . .": that is, as an announce-
ment of potentiality and anticipation rather than a
statement of achieved fact. On plate II he remarks
that "a serpent was not infrequently Blake's symbol
for the priest of organized religion." Although
the Prester Serpent of The Four Zoas might support
such an identification, I cannot offhand think of
other instances where it is explicit. The serpent is
always, primarily, Blake's figure for energy (this
is one of the few instances where a straightforward
identification does work); only a fallen, sneaking
serpent would do for the organized priesthood.
Similarly I would not agree that the male figure
shackled in flames on page 4 "can only be Blake's
devil": he can also, for example, be the male
shackled under the Law. In such cases, Keynes's own
caveat on interpretations of the interlinear decora-
tions—that they are "not always easy and must be
regarded as sometimes conjectural"—may profitably
be extended to interpretations of the text as well.

The interpretations of the interlinear figures
just referred to are, on the other hand, one of the
most valuable features of the new edition. The main
problem is to know whether in some cases they are
straightforward illustrations of the neighboring
texts, or counterpointing images of energy (as
sometimes seems to be the case in the Song of
Liberty). Cautious as one has to be with Blake's
left/right symbolism, something of the sort seems to
be at work here, since figures on the right are
often under the dominion of reason, with a greater
emphasis on energy as one looks along to the left.

What of the reproduction? Arnold Fawcus, of
the Trianon Press, states in his foreword—"The
result, we feel, is as close to the original as can
be obtained by a photo-mechanical process"—which
is fair. The blurb on the dust-jacket, however,
claims that the reproduced plates are "of an accuracy
and delicacy which Blake himself would have admired"
—which is at the very least questionable—and
speaks of their "excellence"—which is certainly too
strong a word. The editor, likewise, claims that the
reproduction is "In all respects . . . most
satisfactory"—which again is somewhat misleading
and is at pains to dispel doubts about the accuracy
of register in the lettering which are in fact well
founded—at least on the highest standards.
For the plain fact (which will no doubt come as a surprise to many readers) is that the facsimile reproduction which H. John Dent made of the other Fitzwilliam copy of the *Marriage* fifty years ago, though by no means perfect, is a good deal closer to its original than is this one. In Dent’s facsimile, colors are sometimes darker than the original, Blake’s brown is a little too orange and occasionally a background tint is out; but in other respects the rendering is extremely faithful. This is less so in the present case. The most glaring difference is that Blake used gilt on many of the plates, which both added a touch of subtle brilliance and pointed the imagery of energy. It was no doubt impossible to manage this with a reproduction based on photography (though, again, Dent managed it for his facsimile in 1927), but the omission should at least have been noted somewhere in the edition; I can find no mention of it. I have also noted a number of further differences, primarily in coloring, from the original: this is not intended in any way to be an exhaustive list, simply a note of those differences which have struck me most forcibly in comparing the plates.

Plate 2 The colors rendered as yellow and orange-brown in the trees and foliage are green and green-brown in the original.

3 The “line effect” on the flames is not as defined as, and the colors are more purple than, the original, which is more orange-brown.

4-5 In the original, colors are lighter and more delicate, giving better definition to the faces, in particular.

8 There is a strong orange effect throughout here, as against the dominant yellow-green effect of the original.

9 A light brown appears, similarly— as against the orange-red of the original.

10 The blues are much stronger, throughout, than in the original.

12 The head title is mauve, as against the orange-red of the original.

14 & 16 (and elsewhere). The lettering gives a fuzzier and lighter effect than in the original.

18-19 The lettering in the blue-green passages is much darker than in the originals, giving a false effect of strong contrast between these and other sections of the text.

21 In the head design the purple is very much exaggerated; in the darker sections of the first five lines there is a red effect which is absent from the original.

24 The effect is much bolder than in the original.

In many cases of course the effect is surprisingly good, and it is obviously necessary to preserve a sense of proportion in making such criticisms. This copy is on any terms a beautiful book, reasonable value at the price and one which most people, including myself, will be glad to have on their shelves. For many purposes, and especially that of comparison with other reproduced versions, mentioned earlier, it will be invaluable. The point at issue is simply that the imprint of the Trianon Press, along with the superlatives used in descriptions of the reproductions, may give many readers the impression that this book is of the same quality as that of the limited editions. An extra qualifying word here or there would have been enough to guard against such a false impression. This reservation aside, Arnold Fawcus, Sir Geoffrey Keynes and the Oxford University Press are to be congratulated (— can hardly, indeed, be sufficiently praised) for bringing this book within the grasp of the ordinary reader.

**Blake Goes German: A Critical Review of Exhibitions in Hamburg and Frankfurt 1975**

*by Detlef W. Dörrebecker*


... our object is to draw the attention of Germany to a man in whom all the elements of greatness are unquestionably to be found, even though those elements are disproportionately mingled. ... but this assuredly cannot lessen the interest which all men, Germans in a higher degree even than Englishmen, must take in the contemplation of such a character.

These words, written by Henry Crabb Robinson, passed almost unnoticed when first published in the Hamburg *Journal Vaterländisches Museum* in 1811. One hundred sixty-four years later Blake and the Germans were given a second chance, and again it was the city of Hamburg where the action took place. A team of young art historians at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, led by Prof. Werner Hofmann, is concerned with organizing a series of magnificent exhibitions entitled "Kunst um 1800" ("Art around 1800"). Here the works of William Blake were shown from 6 March to 27 April 1975, and then, from 15 May to 27 July 1975, they were to be seen at another important German museum, the Städelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main.

Following the showing of the works of his friend Henry Fuseli in Hamburg the exhibition of a great number of Blake’s most important engravings, water-colors, illuminated books and color-prints was placed

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