Geoffrey Keynes, The Gates of Memory

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Wordsworth and other Christian apologists (p. 152) and that Mont Blanc and Frankenstein likewise reject Wordsworth's solitaries. Chapter 5, "The Cult of the South," argues that Lamia, Don Juan, and various works by Shelley and Peacock carry out the anti-Christian sexuality of Erasmus Darwin and Richard Payne Knight. There is a stimulating paragraph on The Witch of Atlas; like almost all the assertions concerning individual works, it would be strengthened by development and demonstration.

The method, then, is to show how brief segments within 1760-1830 can be characterized by changed relations between and within literary works of rebellion or reaction. Alert application of the method brings the observation that "the Napoleonic Wars may have cost more lives in proportion to the British population than the 1914-18 war," and that the "failure of literature to reflect the holocaust" illustrates a turning away from the poor after 1800 (p. 115). Setting Germanic Christianity and gloom against liberal Mediterranean classicism, Butler discovers that the early heroes of Byron and Shelley are activists, their later protagonists passive bystanders (p. 125). The same polarization leads to an identification of contradictions in Manfred (p. 122).

Many of Butler's past strengths continue in this latest book. I hope that its analysis of rapid fluctuation in taste is accurate enough to predict a short life for this period in which literary historians succumb, at a high price, to the seductions of originality.

When Sir Geoffrey Keynes began working on Blake, there was no reliable edition of the complete writings, no bibliography, and no catalogue of the separate plates. Keynes provided all these and much, much more. Few other scholars can have contributed so much of the fundamental research on a major figure, and yet Blake has been only one of Keynes's numerous literary interests, and those interests coexisted with his brilliant career as a surgeon. The Gates of Memory provides us with a fascinating account of the "real Self" of one of the extraordinary figures of our century.

Keynes' editorial interests seem to date back to 1902, when he met Rupert Brooke at Rugby. As a result of their ensuing friendship, Keynes began collecting Brooke's poems; much later he would edit the Poetical Works (1946), Bibliography (1954), and Letters (1968). First authorship also occurred at Rugby with the publication of a prize essay on Roman remains unearthed in a field.
in Cambridgeshire. (For his prize, Keynes chose the
Collected Works of Aubrey Beardsley.) At Pembroke
College, Cambridge, another lifelong interest developed:
with his friend Cosmo Gordon, Keynes began to collect
works by Sir Thomas Browne. His Bibliography of Sir
Thomas Browne was to be published in 1924, and his
Browne collection is almost certainly the greatest in pri-

due to his friends and family. It was
asking a great deal of life, but not too much. I had found
Blake and his conviction that Imagination was the divine gift
to the human race and believed that he was right. The gift
must therefore be exercised and appreciated in others to the
utmost of one's ability. (p. 221)

The stages of work on Keynes' Blake Bibliography (1921)
are recounted in Religio Bibliographici, a Presidential Ad-
dress to the Bibliographical Society delivered in 1953 and
reprinted as an appendix to The Gates of Memory. One
cannot help envying the conditions that prevailed when
Keynes began his Blake collecting. Before 1914 he obtained
the seven Dante engravings from the Linnell family for
seven guineas, and even in 1942 he was able to buy eleven
major items (including the Uglino recently given to the
Fitzwilliam Museum) for £500. But it is not only the early
under-valuation of Blake that accounts for the formation
of a magnificent collection by a collector of limited means.
In acquiring his Blakes, Keynes seems to have combined
the astuteness of a detective with the passion of a lover. All
those many Blake scholars who have enjoyed the hospitality
of Lammas House can testify to the remarkably high quality
of each of the treasures there, as well as to the generosity
and patience with which Sir Geoffrey shared his knowledge
with us, when it often must have seemed to him that we
were busily reinventing the wheel.

Readers of Blake need hardly be told in detail of the
significance of Keynes' Complete Writings, first published
by Nonesuch in 1927 and still alive and well, after
numerous revisions, in the Oxford Standard Authors series.
The checklist of Keynes' writings on Blake from 1910
(when he published a note on "Laughing Song") to 1972 is
a compendious one, and it now needs to be expanded with
the works of another decade, including a third edition of the
Letters. Worthy of special mention are the introduc-
tions and appendices for the William Blake Trust's splendid
facsimiles. Keynes account of the formation and activities
of the Trust also reminds us once more of how much we
are indebted to the late Arnold Fawcus, whose Trianon
Press produced work of such inestimable quality.

An unusual byproduct of Keynes' Blake scholarship
was the ballet Job: A Masque for Dancing. With his
sister-in-law, the artist Gwen Raverat (whose delightful
Period Piece: A Cambridge Childhood should be read
along with The Gates of Memory), Keynes produced a
scenario based on the engraved designs. Ralph Vaughan
Williams composed a beautiful score with the under-
standing that there was to be no dancing on point ("which made him feel ill"). The idea was then offered to Diaghilev, who turned it down as "too English and too old-fashioned." In the end, the work was brilliantly choreographed by Ninette de Valois and performed by the Camargo Society in 1931. Thence it passed into the repertoire of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, now the Royal Ballet. A revival of this ballet, so splendidly true to Blake’s vision, is long overdue (hopefully with the restoration of the original Raverat sets rather than the rather inappropriate ones by John Piper that were later substituted for them).

Space does not permit more than the mere mention of Geoffrey Keynes' other bibliographies: those of John Donne (1915, 4th ed. 1974), the works published by William Pickering (1924), Jane Austen (1929), William Hazlitt (1931), John Evelyn (1937), and Bishop George Berkeley (1977). His achievement as a book collector is indicated by the catalogue of his library, comprising over 4,000 titles, published in 1964. His remarkable life is symbolized for me by one of the many fascinating photographs in this book, showing G.L.K. aged ninety-two in front of the enormous tulip tree at Lammas House. When he died three years later, many a scholar half a century younger felt the loss of one who was at the same time a founder of our discipline and an invigorating contemporary presence—"a friend with whom he liv’d benevolent."2

Notes