

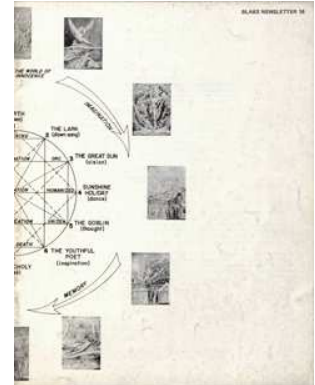
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R E V I E W

Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *The Note-Book of William Blake Called the Rossetti Manuscript (facsimile)*

Robert N. Essick

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latter probably zeros, at least the age of the millennium. Tayler reasons that to Gray's assertion "Dust Thou Art" Blake responds "with a tombstone bearing his own name: the part of me that is dust, it says by implication, I willingly consign to your graveyard, for it is as dead now as it ever will be. But the part of me that lives will outlive the millennium, for it is eternal."

Tayler offers no rules for interpreting the illustrations and proffers no theories to which all the pictures must subscribe. Her careful exploration of design and text and her persuasive allusions to Blake's work to support her findings make this a fine contribution, in fact the only one, to our understanding of the Gray designs. Tayler's method of approach and her insights into Blake's procedures as illustrator should help reveal Blake's meaning in illustrations to other writers and to his own work as well.

Geoffrey Keynes, ed. *THE NOTE-BOOK OF WILLIAM BLAKE CALLED THE ROSSETTI MANUSCRIPT* [facsimile and transcription of the manuscript]. London, 1935. Reprinted New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1970. Pp. xii + 163 + 120 plates (reproductions of MS pages). \$10.00.

Reviewed by Robert Essick, San Fernando Valley State College

This new reprint is a welcomed addition to the growing list of reprinted Blake titles, for certainly we need the *Note-Book* more than John Clarke's *William Blake on the Lord's Prayer*, Alan Clutton-Brock's *Blake*, or some of the other items turned out by the reprint houses. The price of \$10 seems fairly sensible, making the book available to those who can't afford the now very scarce 1935 Nonesuch edition of which only 750 copies were printed. But one must remember the considerable limitations of that new genre, the reprint. What we have here is a reproduction of a reproduction, twice removed from the original. One result is that the *Note-Book* is slowly shrinking. The original is 19.6 x 15.7 cm. (according to Keynes), the 1935 facsimile 19.3 x 15.5 cm., and the reprint 17.8 x 14.4 cm. The mind boggles at the final consequences. Will we ever come to reproductions of a reproduction of a reproduction?

The transcription of the text is not reliable. According to Bentley and Nurmi, *A Blake Bibliography*, Keynes was not able to see his work through the press, and a number of printing errors were introduced, all of course preserved for us by the reprint. A survey of "A Vision of the Last Judgement" shows several substantive variants between Keynes' 1935 transcription and the text in his 1966 *Complete Writings*. Erdman's text in *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake* has further differences, notably in the handling of deleted passages, while the sentence sequence in Jugaku's *A Bibliographical Study of William Blake's Note-Book* varies considerably from all other texts. Erdman seems to be the closest to the manuscript, at least for "A Vision," but Keynes' 1966 edition is an adequate reading text. Both are clearly preferable to this reprinted 1935 transcription.

The reproduction of the manuscript (certainly it is no longer a facsimile) will be more valuable to most Blake students. High contrast photography has resulted in pages cleaner than those in the 1935 issue, with stains and rubbed areas burned out. The reprint seems to be better than its original in some respects, but this is only because the 1935 issue is printed on an off-white, almost yellow paper, while the reprint is on glossy white paper which gives slightly more contrast between black lines

and the dull gray background found in both reproductions. Any improvement is far more a matter of appearance at first glance than any significant gain in clarity. Reading and deciphering slight drawings is about equally difficult in both cases, while the texture of sketchbook paper, ink, and rough pencil sketching retained in the 1935 reproduction is totally lost in the reprint. Neither is as good as the selected pages reproduced in Wicksteed's *Blake's Innocence and Experience*. I suspect that a new reproduction made with infra-red photography would put all these earlier attempts to shame.

One of the more important sections of this volume is the description of the sketches and their relationship to Blake's finished works. Another, and more speculative, page-by-page catalogue of this information is printed as Appendix IV of Mona Wilson's *Life of Blake* (1927, 1948). I include below some additions and corrections to the Keynes list.

Page 13 of the Note-Book The full page watercolor drawing attributed to Robert Blake is very likely the basis for pl. 5 of *The Song of Los*.

Page 15 The sketch of the standing figure and a dog, lower left, is basically the same motif as the boy and dog, pl. 26 of *The Book of Urizen*, and the man and dog in "The Dog strove to attract his attention," pl. 2 of the designs for Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life*.

Page 21 The center sketch may be an early or alternate version of the lower design for "The Sick Rose" in *Songs of Experience*. The quotation from Shakespeare's "Sonnet XV" below the sketch makes a slight thematic connection with "The Sick Rose" consonant with the formal similarities of the designs.

Page 22 The reproduction shows no evidence of the design described by Keynes and Wilson.

Page 26 Keynes quotes Mona Wilson's suggestion that the sketch may represent "The Landing of Julius Caesar," but compare "Satan Calling His Legions" in the Huntington *Paradise Lost* designs and "Satan Rousing His Rebel Angels" in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Page 29 The sketch of a hovering figure is similar to the fifth plate to Blake's *Grave*, "The Soul hovering over the Body reluctantly parting with Life."

Page 30 The sketch is very similar to the ring of dancing figures on the title page of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*.

Page 39 The resemblance to plate 2 of the Wollstonecraft designs noted by Keynes is very slight.

Page 47 The lower sketch does not look like "a woman's head with mediaeval head-dress" as Keynes writes in agreement with Wilson, but rather a young man wearing a three-cornered hat.

Page 56 Compare the posture of the figure "about to leap off the edge of a cliff" (Keynes) to the angel in flames on plate 4 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and in the color print of "The Good and Evil Angels."

Page 57 The sketch is clearly the preliminary for the recumbent figure in the "Introduction" to *Songs of Experience*.

Page 61 In *TLS* 13 September 1957, 547, Kathleen Raine asked if anyone could identify the source of the quotation from Dryden on this page of the *Note-Book*, "At length for hatching ripe he breaks the shell." Just in case she never received an answer, Blake is quoting *Fables Ancient and Modern*, "Palamon and Arcite," Bk. III, line 1069.

Page 72 Compare the sketch to the figure running over the waves on the title page of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*.

Page 74 The woman standing over a supine child, upper left, is the preliminary for the same figures above the text of "Holy Thursday" in *Songs of Experience*.

I suspect that this volume will be rendered nearly useless when Erdman's new facsimile edition of the *Note-Book* appears from the Clarendon Press (announced in *Blake Newsletter*, Fall, 1970, p. 36). Until then, the reprint is all we have available.

DISCUSSION "With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows of thought"

JOHN BEER: PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE

A Reply to Irene Chayes

Since my letter replying to John E. Grant appeared alongside a review of *Blake's Visionary Universe* [see the *Blake Newsletter*, 4 (Winter 1971), 87-90] which raises further points about my reading of Blake's visual designs, I should like to renew the discussion briefly. I was disappointed that Mrs. Chayes reviewed the illustrations and the section of commentary in isolation instead of (as I had hoped) studying both in the context of the book's argument, but this approach is consistent with her general "direct" view of Blake's art. As with her reading of *The Ancient Mariner* as an ironic poem about a deluded visionary (in *Studies in Romanticism* IV), moreover, her view of the early Romantics is so different from mine that it would need more than a note to discuss the larger points at issue. For my own part, her desire for a "concrete, practical, and definable meaning for 'vision' in Blake's art," however laudable, strikes me as quite inappropriate for the sort of vision that Blake himself enjoyed. Either one believes that Blake's interpreting imagination was constantly intervening between his sources and his designs, or one does not, however; and it is good that both points of view should be expressed vigorously. In this note, therefore, I want mainly to comment on the paragraphs in which she suggests that my interpretations of individual designs can be faulted on more elementary grounds.

One or two criticisms can be dealt with quickly. At one point she says: "The opposition set up between men in *Urizen* 25 (fig. 29) and women in *Jerusalem* 75 (fig. 30) is clearly wrong, as John Grant also has pointed out . . ." Mr. Grant, of course, "pointed out" nothing of the kind. What *he* was claiming (entirely without justifica-