

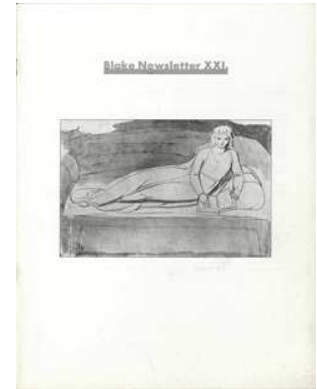
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R E V I E W

Geoffrey Keynes, William Blake's Water-Colour  
Designs for Gray's Poems

Morton D. Paley

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Press facsimiles and Micro Methods microfilms I have checked; but he has not identified the copies he used and, in any case, one could argue that he should have used these more generally available copies. In copies D and I of *The Marriage*, plate 11 depicts both a personified sun with flaming hair and a crowned figure within a wave, tree or plant, as opposed to the single "tritonlike male figure" (p. 111) Stevenson records. Again, the design for "The Argument" in both these copies probably depicts a woman in the tree rather than the "gowned youth" Stevenson sees there (p. 103). Stevenson's description of Oothoon and Bromion, "bound and shackled back to back," in the tailpiece (or frontispiece) of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* omits mention of a very important detail, that Oothoon is not visibly chained (p. 186). Stevenson also ignores the large bird in the upper left corner of the design for "The Shepherd"--a bird which might possibly be the Holy Dove and therefore potentially significant enough to deserve mention (p. 55). Nor is it a "fact" that the "shepherd" (Piper?) in the frontispiece for *Songs of Experience* is "holding the child's arms so that he cannot fly away" (p. 209)--he might be simply balancing the child so that he doesn't fall off.

A few annotations are disappointing: Tharmas, in *The Four Zoas*, seems more complex a figure than Stevenson's identification of him as "Compassion" (p. 288) suggests; his discussion of "Havilah" solely in terms of its Biblical usage (p. 665) ignores Blake's own associations with it in his letter to Hayley, 12 March 1804; and his de-emphasis of the word "system" in "I must create a system" (J 10:20, p. 644) underestimates the importance of an organized system to Blake's late art and poetry. I would also argue against Stevenson's annotation of "dominion of Edom" in *The Marriage*, plate 3, as "dominion over Edom" (p. 105). It seems at least possible that Blake was following Biblical usage here: dominion of in the sense of dominion by. Compare II Chronicles 21:8: "In his [Jehoram's] days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a King."

These are niggling details, however, and Stevenson more than compensates for such minor flaws by giving us so much useful material. In addition to the excellent annotations already mentioned, Stevenson provides illuminating comparisons with the early drafts of "Infant Sorrow" and "The Tyger" and with Isaac Watts' "Cradle Hymn"; helpful maps of Biblical Palestine, of the environs of London mentioned in Blake's poems, and of the city of London in c. 1810; and interesting bibliographical notes telling which poems were paired in seven of the eight earliest copies of *Songs of Innocence*. All of Blake's readers will want to have ready access to the wealth of background and bibliographical information gathered together in this book. Stevenson's volume is the second step toward the ideal edition of Blake: his complete poems, letters and prose writings edited by David Erdman, together with colored photographic reproductions of his illuminated pages, and annotations by W. H. Stevenson.

*William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for Gray's Poems--A Commemorative Catalogue.* With an introduction and commentary by Geoffrey Keynes Kt. London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1971. Pp. xx + 72. Illustrated. \$7.50 + \$1 postage from the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn.

Reviewed by Morton D. Paley

1971-72 were vintage years for the study of Blake's illustrations to the poems of Gray. Previous to that, very little had been seen of this major series of designs and still less written about them.<sup>1</sup> In 1971, however, appeared Irene Tayler's fine study<sup>2</sup>; the illustrations themselves were published in a magnificent facsimile by the Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust; and an exhibition of originals and facsimiles opened at the Tate Gallery. The following spring this exhibition, for which the publication at hand is the catalogue, was mounted at the Yale University Art Gallery in collaboration with the Paul Mellon Center for British Art and British Studies. Although modestly described by its author as "an introductory handbook," this catalogue is in itself a major contribution to the interpretation of its subject.

What inevitably strikes one first is the wealth of illustrations in the catalogue. Sixteen designs (eighteen, counting the front and back covers) are reproduced full-page in color and one in monochrome, and at the back of the book all 116 are given, four to a page, in reduced monochrome. Also reproduced full-page are Flaxman's pencil drawing of Blake and the titlepage of the 1790 edition of Gray which Blake used. There is a useful "Concordance of Blake's handwritten titles" which correlates Blake's titles, the lines from Gray illustrated (as Blake transcribed them), Blake's manuscript numbers, the page numbers of the 1790 edition, and the design numbers. (As Blake numbered his designs for each poem as a separate sequence, his manuscript numbers necessarily differ from the design numbers for the entire series.) This is a very welcome tool for anyone who wishes to study the series at length.

<sup>1</sup>For reproductions prior to 1971, see Robert Essick, *A Finding List of Reproductions of Blake's Art*, *Blake Newsletter*, 5 (1971), 69-72. For a detailed history of the illustrations and the literature about them, see Irene Tayler, *Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray*, pp. 3-25.

<sup>2</sup>Reviewed by Thomas H. Helmstadter, *Blake Newsletter*, 4 (1971), 140-42; see also my review in *Criticism*, 14 (1972), 93-96.

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In addition to providing a succinct introduction, Sir Geoffrey Keynes has written a commentary, some thirty pages in length, which is at the same time inobtrusive and rich with insight. When viewed as a whole, the designs have one aspect which bulks surprisingly large: their social satire. One expects to find this element in illustrations for "The Bard" and the "Elegy," but it is interesting to find it, for example, in "A Long Story." The pictures that accompany this frothy poem end, as Sir Geoffrey points out, "with a satirical picture of how polite society receives the serious artist" (p. 51); and the designs for "The Progress of Poesy" undermine Gray's celebration of the flight of the Muse to Albion's shore in order, as Keynes says, "to express Blake's view of the effect of political tyranny on the state of poetry in England" (p. 55). This dimension of social commentary may also be seen in Blake's renditions of the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" and the "Ode for Music." In some of these pictures Blake, who believed that education, at least in its institutional sense, was "the great wrong," seems to suggest that all is not well at Eton and Cambridge. The public school boys engage in picayune activities that do everything but prepare them for the rigors of Experience; even the poet-figure of "Ode for Music" (design 97) is shown walking away from the Gothic spire and waning Beulah-moon of the background, to pass under the barren limbs of two desolate trees, hardly the "brown o'er-arching groves" of Gray's line.

The Keynes commentary is also valuable in making use of Gray's own published notes to the poems and in pointing out instances where Blake has changed Gray's wording, used non-consecutive lines, or even illustrated a sequence of pages different from that of Gray's text. Also, some interesting remarks are made about parallels between the figures in these designs and in some of Blake's other works, as, for example, in the commentary on design 77 (*The Serpent who girds the Earth*). This catalogue, rich in both word and image, deserves a place in the library of every student of Blake.

Thomas A. Vogler. *Preludes to Vision: The Epic Venture in Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, and Hart Crane*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971. Pp. 222. \$7.50.

Reviewed by Andy P. Antippas

Mr. Vogler's study examines in detail Blake's *Four Zoas* and *Milton*, Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Keats' *Fall of Hyperion*, and Crane's *Bridge*. Crane is by no means a stranger to the "visionary company" (the phrase is from Crane's "The Broken Tower"); however, I would have also liked included a discussion of Tennyson or Browning or Meredith to avoid reopening the abyss now sealed over by Bloom, Langbaum, Kermode, and Miller. Vogler chooses his poems on the basis of a "set of intuitive criteria" (p. 12)--the same decision, he reminds us, Aristotle made when he selected certain dramas to define tragedy. Vogler's analogy is apt. Just as Aristotle entered his subject with certain philosophic prepossessions and set forth a poetic that satisfies one play, *Oedipus Rex*, so Vogler comes to Blake, Wordsworth, and Keats with certain critical predispositions gathered over the years from his work on Crane's *Bridge*. Whether these criteria illuminate the *Zoas* and *Milton* and contribute something new to our understanding of Blake is questionable.

The introductory section, "In Search of the Epic," presents the less-than-novel view that the epic genre died after Milton. More interestingly, Vogler observes that poets had "not given up the ['desire,' (p. 2), or the] attempt to write epic poetry" (p. 4). His comments, however, concerning the difficulty in writing an epic in the absence of a common ideology, and concerning the epic poet's obligation "to give to his race or age a completion and embodiment of the meaning of life that he finds in the accepted but not necessarily conscious metaphysic of the time" (p. 8), go back at least as far as Arnold's "Function of Criticism," A. C. Bradley's "The Long Poem in Wordsworth's Age," and echo uncomfortably Lascelles Abercrombie's classic essays on the epic: "We see him [the epic poet] accepting, and with his genius transfiguring, the general circumstances of his time; we see him symbolizing, in some appropriate form, whatever sense of the significance of life he feels acting as the accepted unconscious metaphysic of his age."<sup>1</sup>

Since Vogler has undertaken to discuss, in Wellek and Warren's terms, the "inner form" of the epic ("attitude, tone, purpose"), one might expect some difficulty in pinning down a working definition or description of the material. We must be satisfied with: a long narrative poem whose sub-

<sup>1</sup>*The Epic* (London: Martin Secker, n.d.), p. 39.

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