

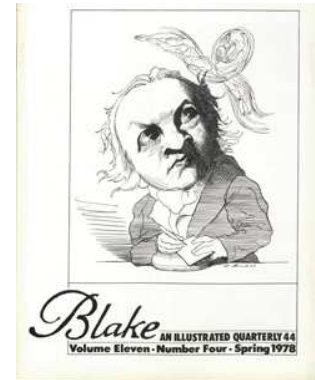
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
BLAKE

N E W S

Job in Frankfurt Schauspielhaus

Detlef W. Dörrbecker

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NEWSLETTER

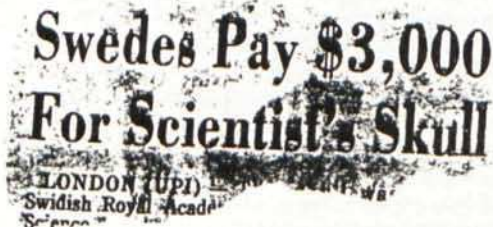
BLAKE THEFT FOILED

According to a report in the *Guardian* for 1 March 1978, p. 2--"Aladdin's cave haul found by police"--police officers in London had arrested a man after finding "Items worth £160,000" in his flat: prints, silver, china, glass, and--"original paintings by William Blake," "illustrations for the poems of Mr Thomas Grey [sic]," which according to the report had been "valued at up to £100,000 by Bonham Galleries." All the stolen items were put on display at the Marylebone police station.

Unfortunately or fortunately, the Blakes turned out in the end to be a Blake Trust facsimile. ITEM COURTESY OF G. E. BENTLEY, JR.

SWEDENBORG \$3000

According to UPI reports, Swedenborg's skull was sold at auction by Sotheby's to the Swedish Royal Academy, which will bury the skull with the rest of



the body, first buried in London (1772), then moved in 1908 to Uppsala Cathedral in Sweden. The skull was stolen in the early nineteenth century. It brought \$3000 at auction in March.

JOB IN FRANKFURT SCHAUSPIELHAUS

In Gilchrist's *Life* we find the record of a conversation between Samuel Palmer and William Blake concerning the *Job* illustrations. Palmer recollects that he "asked him [Blake] how he would like to paint on glass, for the great west window [of Westminster Abbey], his 'Sons of God shouting for Joy,' from his designs in the *Job*. He said, after a pause, 'I could do it' kindling at the thought." (Gilchrist, 1863, I, 303). Almost 150 years after Blake's death this idea--mutatis mutandis--was finally put into practice, not in Westminster Abbey and not by Blake himself, of course, but on stage at the Frankfurt Schauspielhaus by the scenic designer Erich Wonder. On 5 June 1977 I went to see

the first performance of Tankred Dorst and Horst Laube's new play, *Goncourt oder: Die Abschaffung des Todes*--itself, I thought, rather disappointing. The stage directions for scene 16, however, demanded the interior of a small Gothic chapel where members of the 1871 Paris Commune were to be seen during one of their last meetings prior to their final defeat, which was inflicted upon them by the troupes of the reactionary Thiers. The design for the one "stained glass window" shown in the scenery was taken from Blake's *Job* watercolors. A giant transparency enlargement of the Butts version of "When the Morning Stars Sang Together" had been cut into the shape of a slightly pointed twelfth-century Gothic window, thus spreading some spiritual comfort and hope on the representation of that otherwise desparate moment in history. Whether Erich Wonder in his stage design did so with or without knowledge of the Blakean context I cannot say. For me--and I hope some others in the audience too--the appearance of that reproduction both meant that the sufferings of the Commune members were related to the sufferings of the Biblical patriarch, and that at the same time there was a promise for their final redemption (which will be ours too). DETLEF W. DOERRBECKER, FRANKFURT.

JAMES JEFFERYS UPDATE

In *Blake* for spring 1977 it was hinted that two further developments were imminent in the rediscovery of James Jefferys.¹ Both have now appeared in the April 1977 issue of *The Burlington Magazine*. The first article, by John Sunderland, reports the discovery by Timothy Clifford at the close of the Jefferys exhibition that the drawing formerly accepted as a self-portrait from behind by John Hamilton Mortimer in fact shows a figure holding a drawing by Jefferys included in the exhibition.² It was also clear that the drawing was inscribed in Jefferys' hand, including the address "To Mr. Benchley," Jefferys' early patron at Maidstone. The conclusion is that both this drawing, now in the Mellon Collection at Yale, and the companion self-portrait seen from the front, in the National Portrait Gallery, London, are by Jefferys. It is interesting that Sunderland had already suspected that other so-called Mortimers from the same source as these two drawings were not by him; one can now look for a strongly Mortimeresque phase in the development of Jefferys' very eclectic style.

This may be still more eclectic than has been supposed. The other article was by Nancy L. Pressly, identifying Jefferys with the mysterious "Master of the Giants."³ Various attributions to such artists as Prince Hoare have proved untenable and, although Mrs. Pressly's identification has not yet been wholeheartedly accepted in all quarters, it seems convincing to me. The sketchy treatment of the background figures of the "Master of the Giants" drawings, perhaps more than the more consciously finished foreground figures, seems particularly close to Jefferys' style; a distinctive manner of drawing kneecaps is a characteristic feature of both groups of drawings! It is good news that Mrs.