

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY

# BLAKE

N E W S

## The Cut Worm Forgives the Plow

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The appeal of a stable reference is the appeal of closure, a settled question—good on the one hand and evil on the other, and so good night. But Blake's shifty and shifting forms might frustrate this quest for semantic stasis. Extreme forms of the stable code include the Mosaic tablets of the law (as in the *Urizen* and *Milton* designs). Just as the figure of Milton bursts past this stone closure (in the full-page design which is plate 18 in the Rosenwald copy), opening an infinity on the far side, so Blake's iconography may open, multiply, aggravate, and shift its implications, exploding moral norms into dynamic variability. The lion and ox may be said to symbolize different things: but the code within which those meanings are found is one law for the lion and the ox.

That *The Scattered Portions* provokes questions like these should be seen as a strength rather than a weakness. The book's compendiousness, its scholarship, its excellent apparatus, and its generous illustrations contribute to the book's utility, and I know that it will prompt me to argue again more than once. I've already started to analyze more critically Blake's supposed left-right symbolism, for example. Baine is uniform in applying it, but it seems to me that some reversals of the scriptural seating-chart for sheep and goats carry some ideological importance. For the provocation of argument, too, *The Scattered Portions* is a book of value.

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## NEWSLETTER

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### NEW NEWSLETTER

The *Northrop Frye Newsletter*, a new biannual edited by Robert D. Denham, publishes articles about Frye and his work and reviews of his books. Each issue also includes a bibliographic supplement. Copies are free. Address submissions and inquiries to Robert D. Denham, *Northrop Frye Newsletter*, Box D, Emory, VA 24327.

### LAST CHANCE FOR BLAKES

The summer of 1989 is almost certainly the last time it will be possible to see the Tate Gallery's Blake collection in its specially designed gallery. A smaller display of works by Blake will still be on view, and all works on paper that are not on display should be available on demand in the Study Room in the adjacent Clore Gallery (12 pm–5 pm, Tuesday through Saturday). For further information, please call the Tate Gallery at 01-821-1313.

### BLAKE COSTS!

Robert N. Essick reports that the sale of works by Blake from the Doheny Library at Christie's New York, 21 February 1989, established new records for an illuminated book and a water color. *Songs of Innocence* copy N sold for \$330,000 (including 10% buyer's premium) to the London dealer Libby Howie acting for an American private collector. *The Infant Jesus Saying His Prayers*, a water color of c. 1805 (Butlin #473), fetched the remarkable sum of \$352,000 from a bidder on the telephone. Blake's letter of 2 July 1826 to John Linnell sold for \$22,000 to another anonymous purchaser. Details and reproductions will appear in Essick's review of 1989 sales (summer 1990 issue).

### THE CUT WORM FORGIVES THE PLOW

Unfortunately, due to the inexorable rise of production and mailing costs, *Blake* is raising its subscription rates beginning with volume 23, 1989–90.

Individuals: \$20/year

Institutions: \$30/year for volume 23

\$40/year volume 24

Postal surcharges: Surface: \$6  
Airmail: \$15

New advertising rates: Half-page ad: \$80  
Full-page ad: \$120  
Inserts: \$115

Back issue rates: In print: \$6  
Out of print: \$9