

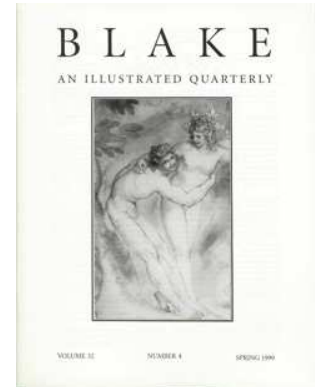
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY  
**BLAKE**

P O E M

**Blake at the Winter Solstice**

Warren Stevenson

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P O E T R Y

Blake at the Winter Solstice

BY WARREN STEVENSON

Invigilating my last Blake exam  
alone with a blonde leggy Swedish girl  
wearing jeans and a modish black sweater  
who has been granted permission to begin early—  
in five hours she'll be flying home for Christmas  
(we both have the sniffles).

A crepuscular calm has descended over the campus—  
over the virgin snowfall, the darkening winter greenery,  
and the androgynous clock tower  
whose carillon even now begins playing, softly—  
then abruptly ceases.

One of the window panes begins vibrating violently  
without breeze or other apparent cause (a minor earth  
tremor?)

The last time this happened—four, five years ago, same  
room—  
another of my students (a Blake scholar's son)  
wordlessly opened his briefcase,  
removed a roll of masking tape and scissors,  
cut off a piece and pasted it over  
a corner of the window—thus stopping the vibration—  
then resumed writing his exam (applause).

I mention this to the Swedish girl  
who is probably thinking of glogg and Golgonooza  
and (being a man without masking tape)  
try opening a louver, which somehow does the trick . . .

Now the others swarm in with back packs, water bottles,  
pens—  
all save one, who was assaulted at knifepoint  
and limped into class the next day (aegrotat)—

altogether armed with the knowledge  
that it is dangerous to read Blake  
and more dangerous not to.