

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY

# BLAKE

N E W S

## Another Blake Watercolor Cleaned at Tate Gallery

Martin Butlin

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This will be the third graduate offering of Blake at the University of Tulsa. The first was a seminar in 1968 concentrating upon *Milton*, and, according to Professor Weathers, "it was in that seminar that the idea for *Blake Studies* was developed by Kay Parkhurst and Roger Easson." The second offering was a seminar in 1971 with special emphasis upon student creative work--plays and poems primarily--written in response to Blake's work.

ANOTHER BLAKE WATERCOLOR CLEANED  
AT THE TATE GALLERY

Report by Martin Butlin, Keeper of the British Collection, The Tate Gallery, London. The Tate Gallery, continuing its policy of cleaning and, where necessary, remounting and re-framing its Blakes, has just treated the large early watercolor of "Oberon, Titania and Puck with Fairies Dancing," c. 1785-90. As can be seen from the reproduction in the second, 1971, edition of the Tate Gallery Blake catalogue, it was badly discolored with, in addition, several localized stains. The main discoloration was in the paper itself and this has been successfully bleached out and practically all of the stains removed, revealing the original delicacy and translucency of Blake's watercolor washes. In particular, the reds are now much cooler and accord better with the exceptionally delicate blue of Titania's dress; Oberon's robe is now white. Also more evident is the pentimento by which Blake changed the position of Titania's head; this was originally higher on the paper, making her tower over her consort. The first pair of eyes drawn by Blake can now be seen in the middle of her forehead and the original chaplet round her hair retains its blue coloring, whereas that in the revised position was left uncolored.

BLAKE ON EXHIBITION

The John Linnell Exhibition at Colnaghi's was something of a revelation for those who had been reluctant to take him seriously as a painter. It is clear from the extensive showing of his work that he could hold his own in perhaps the greatest period of English landscape. Even more remarkable is the individuality of his talent; his best work has a freshness and directness that one might compare with Constable, but in a subtler sense the analogy is really more with the minute naturalism of his German contemporaries. One remembers his advice to Samuel Palmer to look at Dürer, and his connection with the Aders circle, who were pioneers in the appreciation of Northern "Primitives," and who regarded Blake as a fellow spirit. Although there are in the exhibition a number of Blakes that were formerly in the Linnell collection and a fine selection of portraits of Blake by Linnell, there is little that sheds new light on Blake. There is a recently discovered Linnell portrait drawing purportedly of Blake, but I doubt if such a ponderous and respectable figure can be identified as the

poet, although the features are undeniably like. Linnell's proven portraits of Blake are always more animated and usually have some hint of prophetic fire, particularly in the eyes. (Report by David Bindman, University of London)

A Blake Exhibit at the Rockefeller Library of Brown University was held in January, featuring Trianon Press and other facsimiles. John J. Kupersmith prepared a section showing Blake's illustrations of other authors, and Tom Bodkin prepared a presentation showing the evolution in design of Blake's illuminated books. The project grew out of a bibliography class taught by librarian Stuart Sherman.

FUSELIS AT AUCTION

On Tuesday, 6 March 1973, Christie's auctioned "Fine English Drawings and Watercolours." Among them were a standing male nude, two studies of female heads, and an album of letters by Fuseli, as well as works by Romney, Rowlandson, and Varley.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Ann Dunlap: a study of "The Mental Traveller" in relation to twentieth-century literary criticism; a Ph.D. dissertation directed by Morris Eaves at the University of New Mexico.

James Ferguson: a study of the reintegrating or religious vision of *Jerusalem* and Biblical prophecy, with special reference to the Book of Ezekiel; and the structure of *Jerusalem* with regard to eighteenth-century ideas of Biblical prophecy; a Ph.D. dissertation directed by Michael Phillips at the University of Edinburgh.

Frank M. Parisi: a study of the relationship of the Book of Job to Blake's painting, engraving, and poetry by research in the visual, poetic, and theological sources from which Blake drew both for his understanding of the Book of Job as a work of literature and for the imagery in *The Gates of Paradise*, the *Songs*, some of the early prophetic books, and the engravings and watercolors of the Book of Job; a Ph.D. dissertation directed by Michael Phillips at the University of Edinburgh.

Lois Viscoli: a study of Prometheus as an archetype of creativity in the works of Blake and Shelley; a Ph.D. dissertation directed by Morris Eaves at the University of New Mexico.

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Robert Essick, ed., *The Visionary Hand: Essays for the Study of William Blake's Art and Aesthetics*. Reprinted articles, some revised. 500 pp., 174 ill. Early fall, 1973, from Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc.

Robert Essick and Jenijoy LaBelle, eds., *Blake's Night Thoughts Engravings*. Facsimile of poem with designs and a commentary. In preparation for Dover.