

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
BLAKE

N E W S

MLA Blake Seminar, December 1972

Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr.

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 6, Issue 2, Fall 1972, p. 42



News

CORRECTION

The following is a correction by Martin Butlin of a point made in his note on "William Blake in the Herbert P. Horne Collection," *Blake Newsletter* 21 (Summer 1973), p. 19:

I gave the alternative datings for Moore & Co's advertisement given by Keynes and David Bindman but regrettably failed to record the definitive arguments for dating the print, and hence the related drawing, to 1797-98 by David Erdman in his article "The Suppressed and Altered Passages in Blake's *Jerusalem*," in *Studies in Bibliography*, 17 (1964), 36, n. 34.

Although the figure style of this print is relatively tame in its delicacy and neo-classicism when one thinks of the dramatic impact of the large color prints of 1795, the style is perfectly acceptable in view of the commercial nature of the undertaking and considerably more accomplished than Blake's earlier work for commercial engravings such as the illustrations to Mary Wollstonecroft of 1791. There are indeed close similarities, allowing for the differences in scale and subject, to some of the *Night Thoughts* illustrations of 1796-97, for instance the smaller figures on the title-page to *Night the First*.

That the crude drawing on the reverse can still be dated c. 1779 is no objection to a later dating for the recto. Thanks to Bentley, Blake's economic re-use of paper is now well documented and there are a number of cases in which a sheet of paper has been used at widely differing dates, sometimes after being cut in half in the process (e.g., the drawing for "The Eagle" in the Rosenwald collection, on the back of which Blake drew two alternative title-page [?] designs considerably later in style).

TEMPORARY CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Morton Paley, Executive Editor of the *Newsletter*, will be in England from May 1973 until 15 September 1973. During that time, mail will reach him most quickly if addressed to him in care of the Chelsea Arts Club, 143 Old Church Street, London S.W. 3.

MLA BLAKE SEMINAR, DECEMBER 1972

Report by Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr., University of Wisconsin. A distinguished interpreter of Blake has observed that "Blake studies have, until recently, been hampered by a lack of scholarly interaction that leads to a progressive growth of understanding." The Blake Seminar, instituted five years ago through the efforts of David Erdman, is

one of many contributions to the *scholarly interaction* and cooperation that have come to mark Blake studies in recent years. The Seminar has consistently provided a forum for new ideas on Blake and has attracted a wide range of students--graduates and some undergraduates, seasoned scholars and new ones, most of them writing about Blake, but some of them art historians and literary scholars whose interests extend far beyond Blake. With an audience so diverse in its interests and commitments, it has seemed desirable to change the format of the Seminar in order to achieve an even greater exchange of ideas among those attending it. This year, instead of listening and responding to a single paper, those attending the Seminar were asked to read and to come prepared to discuss four essays presented under the rubric of "Blake and Tradition" and published in the Fall 1972 issue of *Blake Studies*: Florence Sandler's "The Iconoclastic Enterprise: Blake's Critique of Milton's Religion"; Robert N. Essick's "Blake and the Tradition of Reproductive Engraving"; Thomas H. Helmstadter's "Blake and the Age of Reason: Spectres in the *Night Thoughts*"; and Leslie Tannenbaum's "Blake's Art of Crypsis: *The Book of Urizen* and Genesis."

The scheduled time for the Seminar was less than ideal: the last hour of the last day of the convention. Even so, attendance was impressive--fifty-five people, according to the official MLA representative assigned to the meeting. Discussion was not as lively as one may have wished, partly because of the hour and partly because of the topic which, however engaging, prevented sharply focused discussion. It may be, too, that at least two of the papers required an awareness of the Bible and its traditions that Blake assuredly had but that few of us possess.

Next year's seminar, following essentially this same format, will focus on a more restricted topic, "Perspectives on Blake's *Milton*." The discussion leader will be Professor Karl Kroeber, Department of English, Columbia University; and the papers chosen by him to provide a point of departure for next year's discussion will, once again, appear in the Fall issue of *Blake Studies*. Its editors, Professors Kay and Roger Easson, merit special notice for their cooperation and for their generosity which have made it possible to continue this year's "experiment"--an experiment that provides for maximum participation of those attending the Seminar and that invites the "scholarly interaction" that will further our understanding of Blake.

GRADUATE SYMPOSIUM AT UNIVERSITY OF TULSA

In April and May of 1973 the University of Tulsa will present a Blake graduate symposium under the general direction of Winston Weathers, Professor of English. The first lecture in the symposium will be given Wednesday, 11 April, by Robert Gleckner, University of California at Riverside. The next four weekly lectures will be given by Professor Weathers. Two final sessions, late in May, will be devoted to the presentation of papers by the ten graduate students participating in the symposium for credit. All sessions of the symposium will be open to the public free of charge.