



Photograph by Lars Beggren

R E M E M B R A N C E

“All his neighbourhood bewail his loss”: Bo Ossian Lindberg, 1937–2021

BY MORTON D. PALEY

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MY dear friend Professor Bo Ossian Lindberg died on 4 July 2021, after a long illness. A professor of art history at Åbo Akademi (Finland) who had also taught at Lund University (Sweden), Ossian permanently changed the face of Blake studies with his study of the *Job* illustra-

tions. Because it had been issued as a printed doctoral dissertation (Åbo Akademi, 1973)—printed, but not published—it was neither advertised nor sent out to journals for review. Yet when approached by scholars such as Martin Butlin and myself, university presses in the UK and USA declined to publish it because it was already in print! In 1974, when we first met, Ossian told me that seven copies had been sold. However, it gradually was recognized as revolutionary, like all great works of scholarship.

Although it's difficult to isolate any part of its rich exposition from the whole, two of its distinctive characteristics are the presentation of a large section of its text in the form of a catalogue and its application of the Warburgian conception of pathos-formula to the *Job* designs. In reviewing it, G. E. Bentley, Jr., wrote:

I conclude that Mr. Bo Lindberg's dissertation on *William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job* is the best dissertation I have ever examined, one of the two or

three best I have ever read, and one of the half dozen most important books on Blake's art. Every responsible Blake scholar must read it. It is a work of the highest distinction. We are all indebted to Mr. Bo Lindberg.

Continuing his passionate engagement with Blake's art and poetry, Ossian published articles and reviews in *Blake*, a short, updated discussion of the engravings in the great Blake Trust edition of *Job*, and the chapter on Sweden and Finland in *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*. The festschrift published in his honor reflects the depth and diversity of his scholarly interests. He was also a richly inventive painter, whose imaginative cycle on the life of Blake in the Turku Art Museum (Finland) has been documented in *Blake* and whose other works, such as the one reproduced here, indirectly but unmistakably reflect Blake's influence. In both writing and painting, his was the hand of Los.

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The Minerva Owl by Bo Ossian Lindberg, interior wall painting in Åland. Acrylic. Reproduced courtesy of Tia Itkonen.