

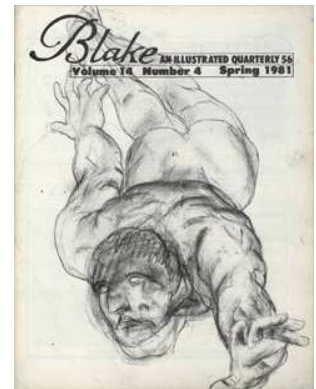
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY  
**BLAKE**

R E V I E W

Göran Malmqvist, ed. and trans., *En Ö på Månen*

Erik Frykman

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William Blake  
**EN Ö PÅ MÅNEN**

Översättning och inledning  
 av Göran Malmqvist



Bromberg's

Göran Malmqvist, ed. and trans. **En Ö på Månen**. Uppsala: Bromberg's bokförlag, 1979. Facsimile of the manuscript, transcription, Swedish translation, 14 reproductions. \$14.50.

Reviewed by Erik Frykman.

**A**s author of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and as visionary artist Blake has had a fair amount of attention in Sweden, and individual short poems have been translated. As visionary poet he is less well known outside academic circles, and even *intra muros* he is certainly not a familiar name to most students. In these days of soaring book prices and some diffidence on the part of publishers it is pleasing that a comparatively small but enterprising firm, Messrs. Bromberg of Uppsala, should have ventured to bring out, beautifully produced, a Swedish translation with parallel English text of *An Island in the Moon*. In a country with the firmest of beliefs in specialization, it is equally pleasing that the translator-editor is not an Eng. Lit. man but a professor of sinology. Göran Malmqvist of the University of Stockholm is widely known not only as a scholar but also as an assiduous translator of Chinese verse and prose. As these things will sometimes happen, his interest in Blake is said to have been aroused during a visit to Peking.

For this volume--which includes some well-chosen black-and-white illustrations--Professor Malmqvist provides a lengthy introduction where, with obvious zest and an entirely convincing knowledge of the period concerned and of Blake scholarship, he outlines the intellectual and social background of Blake's

burlesque. It is to be regretted that he did not take time--or perhaps was not granted the space--to say a little more about Blake as poet and artist, the more so since *An Island in the Moon* provides more than one early glimpse into Blake's firmly held tenets and, of course, presents not only the waywardly burlesque songs but also three of the *Songs of Innocence*. How one wishes that the volume could also have contained the text and translation of, for instance, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; the Swedish reading public would then have had more of an introduction to Blake's thought and genius. However, there is every reason to be grateful to Professor Malmqvist, the more so because as translator of an often intriguing text he succeeds excellently, even with those difficult, bafflingly allusive songs.

He offers an independent, conjectural interpretation of the enigmatic word "wickedly" (in Chapter 5) which he translates as if it were a deliberate corruption of "videlicet." It has much to say for his skill as translator that the only passage that leaves him resourceless is Blake's elaborate pre-Joycean pun, "An Easy of Huming Understanding, by John Lockye, Gent."

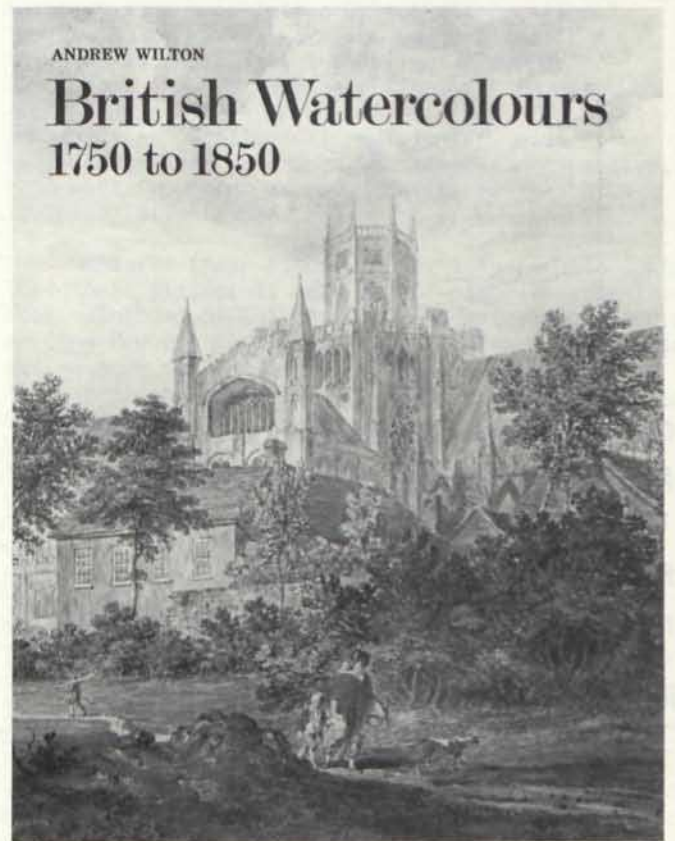
A mock-serious appendix by the translator is one large joke at the expense of the government-

imposed leveling-down tendencies in the Swedish educational system of these latter days. However, as a Swede one feels a slight consolation after having listened to a lecture at the recent I.A.U.P.E. conference in Aberdeen, where Professor George S. Rousseau of UCLA gave his somber view on the lack of

interest taken in eighteenth-century literature by American university students. Some of his colleagues from both sides of the Atlantic chimed in, but all showed determination to do something about it. The academic world everywhere is in sore need of daring enthusiasts; Göran Malmqvist is certainly one of them.

Andrew Wilton. **British Watercolours 1750 to 1850.** Oxford: Phaidon, 1977. 208 pp., 170 plates (53 in color). £12.95.

Reviewed by William Vaughan.



**T**he rise of watercolor painting as an independent art form is intimately connected with the character and fortunes of British art in the decades around 1800. An impressive number of the finest painters of the time--such as John Robert Cozens, Thomas Girtin and John Sell Cotman--chose it as their principal medium. Many other major artists--notably William Blake and J. M. W. Turner--used it frequently and with great originality. In view of this it might be expected that the subject would be given an important place in any study of British Romantic art. Yet on the whole it has tended to be treated as a theme apart, relegated to specialists, most of whom approach it from the viewpoint of the connoisseur. Such commentaries have of course been invaluable in building up our knowledge of the identity of individual practitioners and for charting the history of the organizations that grew up as the practice of watercolor painting expanded. But they have tended to be less informative about the broader context. There is little treatment of the question of why watercolor should step from its modest position as an ancillary sketching medium (as which it had been used by great masters of all

countries since the middle ages) to that of a method suitable for finished pictures. The change involved the development of new attitudes to the study of natural effects, spontaneity and the interest in local scenery, all of which are connected with the emergent Romantic movement. There are social questions as well. Watercolor was a favored medium of amateurs and drawings masters. Not all of these were insignificant figures. John Ruskin is a distinguished example of the former and John Sell Cotman of the latter. But more important than this from a historical point of view is the fact that watercolorists were active in social groups where oil painters had little purchase. Often they cut quite a figure. Thackeray talks of "gay, smart, watercolour painters"; and there are examples in contemporary novels of the impact they could have in the homes of gentlemen.

Andrew Wilton's book--which covers the heyday of the British watercolorists--is to some extent aware of these wider issues. However, he is principally concerned with providing a clear and readable account of the leading lights of the school.