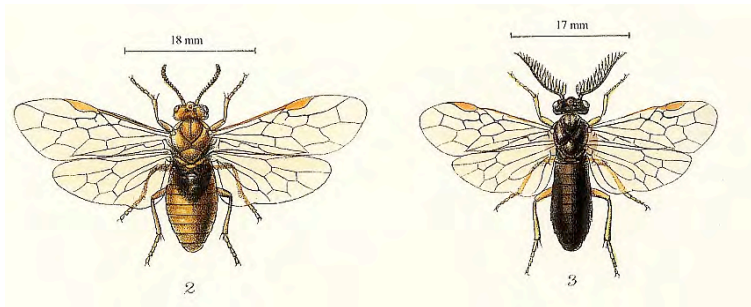


# Swedish Romanticism

(a survey through the eyes of Surrealism)

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## Introduction

Recently I had a reason to remember Swedish romanticism.

And I might grab this pretext to repeat the major lines of the modern surrealist assimilation of local romanticism in this country, probably for the first time to non-Swedish speakers. Some elements of Swedish romanticism had already been noticed by most of the older local surrealists; ranging from a recognition of undeniable surrealist points of intersection with the major romantics Almqvist and Stagnelius, by for example Lundkvist and von Holten, to the great debt to and appreciation of, or even immersion in, romanticism of Grate and Svanberg, and in his own way Ekelöf – perhaps romantics themselves as much as surrealists, but still not systematically exploring their precursors. It was only the active efforts at mapping Swedish surrealist prehistory made by Carl-Michael Edenborg, Bruno Jacobs and myself in the 80s and 90s that highlighted the activity of the local romantic movement and investigated the romantic writers on behalf of surrealism.

To begin with, we choose to take romanticism in a narrow sense (even though there are other senses that make sense). Sympathising with the struggling activist movement of the earlier decades of the 19th century, we feel obliged to an – admittedly strictly speaking onesided but in our own eyes mutual – face-value recognition; please take this as the mere polite gesture on the non-chronological mythological and collaborative level it is, and not as our taking sides in the interesting ongoing debate between the historical-objectivist, "sociological" or "subjective-objective" view and the conceptual-objectivist "cohesionist" view. In fact, we would like to be able to apply simultaneously the needs for trueness to historical facts, empathic connections, coherence of mental configurations, and particular historical uses of concepts. It may be that the way to do this coherently has not yet been found, and wherever we do not have an extensive framework where we can sort out the semantics at length, we shall refrain from applying the designation of romanticism retrospectively to the Swedenborgian radical occultist, Sturm-und-Drang or radical senti-

mentalist currents of the 18th century, or to the scattered utopian-socialist, vaguely-symbolist or neo-occultist currents of the late 19th. Many of the components of an integrated romantic outlook indeed gave rise to a movement, or rather a cluster of different movements, in the 18th century too, but the romantic notion of poetry and the self-consciousness of the romantic movement provided a lever for their sublation into the full-scale, explicit and integrated romanticism of the early 19th century.

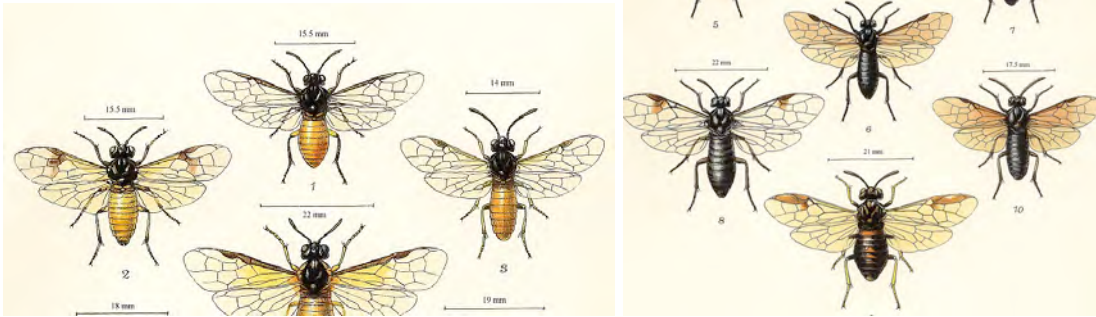
What follows is just an overview and recapitulation of the movement as seen through our pooled researches. In the 1990s in particular we were cultivating all kinds of contacts in cultural circles, including writers and publishers who took an interest in romanticism largely because of its alleged "literary value", and historians of literature who preferred to see things on a "textual level", while historians of ideas might consider ideas "very interesting" without distinguishing that which is dynamic, seriously fascinating and true to the spirit of poetry, from that which is not. We do not share any of those perspectives. Our own perspective will focus on poetry as the sole superordinate perspective, the sense of poetry and the strategies for cultivating, investigating and taking up arms for defending poetry that were developed in romanticism, which is an experience that we would like to add to our own - all other purposes make little sense here.

Or, there might possibly be a good reason at all times (and possibly particularly now? at least we must allow for the interpretation of this little initiative as *symptomatic*) to be inspired to take offensive action against specifically narrow rationalism and an ideological sense of Enlightenment!

### **Outline of the romanticist movement in Sweden**

In Sweden more than in other places, the boundary between 18th century "pre-romanticism" and 19th century self-conscious romanticism is almost ridiculously sharp, as there was an effective censorship in force between 1792 and 1809. During these years, the old generation of radicals retired, died or were expelled from the country. There was no continuous channel for output of poetic expression which might demonstrate a transition in attitudes and techniques. The Swedish romantic movement surfaced fully-formed and very suddenly with the sudden freedom of the press in 1809. Through a series of journals and magazines, of which the earliest were *Lyceum*, the polemical *Polyfem* and the the bright orange poetic *Phosphoros*, and later through books and teaching positions, they introduced a new sense of poetry into the country, fought a harsh and very unambiguous battle against dominant-orthodox neo-French-classicism in the arts and "enlightened" post-Leibnizian Lutheran-orthodox ultrarationalism in philosophy. To their contemporary world they were known as "Phosphorists" or the "New School". In 1821, after a little more than a decade, they had won the battle and were becoming established and complacent.

Although it carried through some of its intended reforms, as well as a generation shift, the ending of the romantic movement is characteristically difficult to pinpoint. Already in 1821, many of the leading fighters were content to rest on their laurels, while others started another similar fight against the emerging liberalism that lasted for yet some time, but as the century progressed it became gradually less clear to what extent this fight was actually carried out from the position of romanticism as such.



At this point, liberalism was not well known, and the romantics clearly regarded it as simply a rationalist backlash against romanticism, a return to simplified instrumental reason and oppressive "common sense", once again replacing sensibility with quantification. To some extent they were right in this suspicion, and it was mostly in a somewhat later guise that liberalism came to be a focus for the struggle for actual social reform, democracy and women's rights. Indeed at that point some of the romantics were in the forefront of it, while others were violently opposed to it perhaps more because of their established status in general than because of romanticism.

On the other hand, we have no ambition to whitewash romanticism wholesale, and it is a historical fact that the ideology of conservatism grew out of romanticism – it must be noted that romanticism can, and does, fuel a wide spectrum of political convictions, basically anything but complacent laissez-faire...

And while where at it, admitting the conservatism often connected with romanticism, we can also note that the romantics were patriots (as everybody was at the time – but the romantics' patriotism was xenophilic rather than xenophobic, and more focused on developing a poetry and an intellectual discourse in their own language (as opposed to academic Latin and upperclass French) and on investigating local history, old mythology and folk poetry; but of course the latter often included absurd fantasies of Sweden having been the cradle of culture and the real Atlantis, from which the Greeks, the Jews, and the oriental peoples stole everything, and far worse, it of course nurtured the tragic illusions of an organic unity across the layers and classes of society), that the romantics were Christians (again like most people at the time – though a highly syncretistic and poetically centred Christianity, sometimes with openly pantheistic and anticlerical elements; dangerous in the eyes of the Lutheran orthodoxy), and that their appraisal of the virtues of femininity did not exclude practical subordination and sometimes degradation of women as well as prolonging the old ideology of a very specific complementarity which effectively curbed women – although the movement also opened new active roles for women, produced some of the more important early feminists, and most importantly, historically subverted the ideology of complementarity by elevating traditionally feminine virtues such as sensibility, intuition and nature-nearness into general ideals as well as active weapons for the transgressive figure of the poet.

While its cause was won as early as 1821, there can be said to still have existed a real romantic movement throughout the 1820s, a time when several of the most famous literary works of Swedish romanticism were written or published. After that, literary works of romanticism continued to appear but without a basis in a real movement.

Throughout romanticism's brief history, and afterwards too, there was a rather significant tension between the two main centres of Uppsala and Stockholm. Uppsala romanticism was conducted by academics and had a slightly more aloof and unworldly image, often – but certainly not in its entirety – with more of a focus on writing poems, on conservatism, but also on slightly broader applications in arts and sciences. In spite of its less practical public image, it was in Uppsala that the romantics

had a printing house of their own, and attained an additional cultural power base in the form of academic positions. It also produced the particular forum of literary salons, which became long-lived and in a sense became the organisational form in which romantic circles were maintained during and after individual careers (but soon they became indistinguishable from the town's leading conservative academic circles in general rather than being specifically romantic). Stockholm romanticism was conducted by civil servants, with a far rougher edge, often radical, urban if you will, with more of a focus on polemics, but also with a strong current of romantic irony. Organisationally the romantics in Stockholm preferred the model of secret societies, mock orders, or brotherhoods. And in contrast with the embalmed preservation of the circles in Uppsala, the Stockholm romantics soon disbanded, several dying young, some focusing on their civil service careers, and others scattered among the liberal and the conservative press.



And while official historiography states that romanticism was succeeded by realism or liberalism or Biedermeier, already these options show the transition to be characteristically vague. About realism, hm, the major realists were in fact romantic novelists like Almqvist; it is difficult to see any clear contradiction here, as realism in this sense is merely a means which might perfectly well be used for purposes arising from or congruent with romanticism. About liberalism, hm, to the extent that liberalism was ever radical it was partly as a rejuvenation of the radical implications embodied in romanticism too, though it was more concrete mainly in the economic sphere where it, ok, reflects the interests of a specifically capitalist bourgeoisie, and is admittedly largely diametrically opposed to romanticism. Biedermeier, hm, ok, in spirit Biedermeier has a reductive and antiromantic dynamics in its romanticisation of petty bourgeois family life and commercial exchange, yet its major proponents were all ageing or latecoming romantics, and it can perhaps be more accurately seen as a decadence-senility phenomenon of romanticism grown old.

### **Romantic sources**

We should emphasise that Sweden in many ways was the northern outskirts of German culture. Particularly so regarding romanticism; it is the traditions, the problems and the solutions highlighted by Hamann, Herder, Hölderlin, Hegel and Hoffmann, by Schiller, Schlegel, Schlegel, Schelling and Schleiermacher, by Fichte, by Goethe, by Novalis, by Jean Paul, by Tieck, which are taken on. The relation to France is actively ambiguous, as France more than anything represents classicist rules and narrow-elegant "good taste" (but also the forbidden revolution) - among the romantics, inevitable French sources of inspiration like Rousseau and Chateaubriand are usually tactically downplayed. The English language was far less accessible to the Swedish at the time, and even though some of the British sources in romanticism are recognised, this is mostly via German mediation; it is the Shakespeare, Ossian, Young

and Sterne of the German *Stürmer und Dränger* – while of contemporary romantics (such as Wordsworth and Coleridge) there is not a word, not until Byron and Scott became world famous somewhat later.

But even if the local continuity had been disrupted by force, there are some local sources of importance too; the greatest of which are Höijer, Thorild & Swedenborg. Benjamin Höijer was the only immediate conveyor of tradition; a political and philosophical radical from the 1790s who taught philosophy in Uppsala and introduced contemporary German idealist philosophy to many of the central romantics, also developing parts of romantic philosophy on his own.

Thomas Thorild was the central figure of the Swedish *Sturm und Drang* movement, and on the whole was Sweden's first independent, oppositional intellectual; a violent polemicist against classicism and against whatever injustice or stupidity that caught his eye, a violent philosopher and poet, a Promethean character introducing free verse, poetic violence, anticlerical pantheism, sensualistic Spinozism, criticism based on philosophical principles and holistic concerns rather than on religious orthodoxy and technical error-seeking, as well as a feminist and an enthusiast for the French revolution, whose implicit revolutionary invocations against the king led to his being expelled from the country, so that he was not able to convey any of this spirit in person to the next generation.

The famous theosophist Emanuel Swedenborg was long gone of course, but he was the major icon for most of the broad and heterogenous occultist currents then flourishing, especially in their most politically radical varieties, the colourful libertarian adventures of which can be read about elsewhere. But Swedenborg was not just an icon but also an important writer in his own right, with his doctrine of correspondences and its associated psychology and metaphysics, based on two major sources, his early career in natural science and his regular conversations with the angels. His philosophy of analogy is more systematic than most, but only some romantics were deeply marked by it, after which it was largely forgotten again until rediscovered in late 19th century neo-occultism and symbolism.

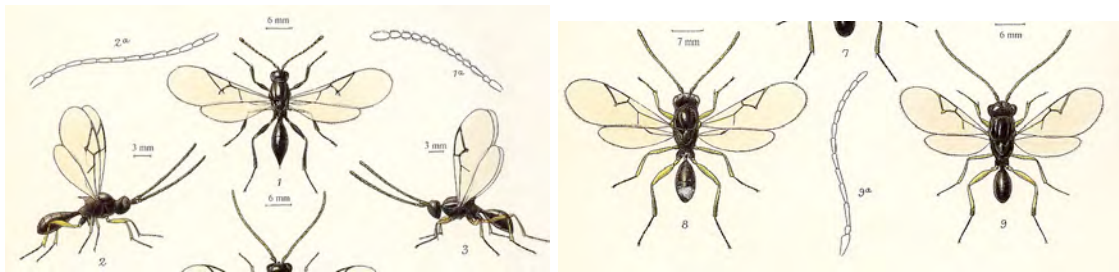
It can also be pointed out that the major enemy in the polemics of every single strand of "pre-romanticism" (18th century romanticism) in Sweden was the unholy alliance of common-sense rationalist philosophy, rigid Lutheran orthodoxy, and despotic state power which went under the name of "Enlightenment". State poets were hired by the king to pursue explicit Enlightenment campaigns, directed against "superstition" specifically in the guise of the mainly lower-class popular pietist sects and Swedenborgianism, various local charlatans and entertainers, as well as poetic radicalism, and anything that related to the French revolution (it was illegal to publish news about France); all in the favor of clerical and royal power (Gustaf III's alleged enlightened despotism). Thus, not unlike combative currents in our present-day rationalism, the 18th century Enlightenment was in Sweden mostly an aggressive campaign against any free-thinking and popular deviations in favour of the ruling powers, and this was the brand of "Enlightenment" that the Swedish romantics defined themselves against.

### **A few iconic writers: Livijn, Stagnelius, Almqvist, Atterbom**

Contrary to popular misconception, in the romantic movement there was no celebration of the lonely creative genius. On the contrary, poetry was recognised as an impersonal force, and – at least for many participants and during the crucial years – it

was not a matter of making a literary career to promote one's own name. There was a strong collective identity as a movement; some works were collectively penned, such as the two volumes of *Markalls sömnlösa nätter*, and for example Palmblad's novels included poems by his friends; some of the major authors published very little during their lifetimes, while several participants wrote mainly letters and diaries and nothing for publication, thus "wasting their talent" for non-careerist ends as well as highlighting the extent to which they expected poetry to permeate and take expression in various areas of life and not just written poems.

Nevertheless, a small number of romantic writers are indeed such fascinating figures, and their works so recommendable, that they fulfil an important, half-mythological role as icons.



Officially considered a "minor romantic", Clas Livijn is in fact one of the most important from a surrealist viewpoint. Violent, full of contradictions, so impatient that he hardly ever finished a text, irreligious, in the early years scandalously politically radical, mimetic (he tried to become the Swedish Shakespeare, Sterne and later Hoffmann) yet a unique mind and writer. He was one of the major forces of the Stockholm romantics in the early literary battle and in the second, excessive *Markall*, but published only a few books during his life. They included *Johan David Lifbergs lefverne*, a Sterne-paraphrase fragment, and a free translation of Tieck's *Puss in boots*, iconic for the less subtle applications of romantic irony. In a calender he published an uncanny story of psychological horror, "Samvetets fantasi", but his numerous beginnings of bloody tragedies and a necrophilic poem remained in his closet, like the posthumously published strange mermaid fairy tragedy "Hafsfrun" and *Riddar St Jöran*, a remarkable Hoffmannesque fantastic-occult-satiric-humoristic novel.

Livijn's central work is the incredible novel *Spader Dame*, a story literally about mad love, told in the form of letters in the most elaborately metaphorical-rhetorical tangles and collapses (a sharpened Sternean rhetoric, as later exemplified also by Melville and Lautréamont), with unfettered eccentricities, far-fetched humour and romantic irony.

Erik Johan Stagnelius was posthumously officially considered one of the major romantics, even though he remained shy and isolated, did not take active part in the romantic movement, and published very little. In fact, he was perhaps slowly commencing a literary career, having just published a remarkable collection of "theosophical" poems, *Liljor i Saron*, and a few very bloody tragedies when he died at the age of 29. His works constitute a strangely coherent body of unique romantic Gnosticism: a truly visionary metaphysics of love where every tiny detail is revealed as permeated with perpetual and tragic desire, not stopping short of truly paranoid pandaemonism nor the famous ode to putrefaction. In fact, the emotional amplitude along which the Stagnelian corpus varies is as extreme as its philosophical coherence

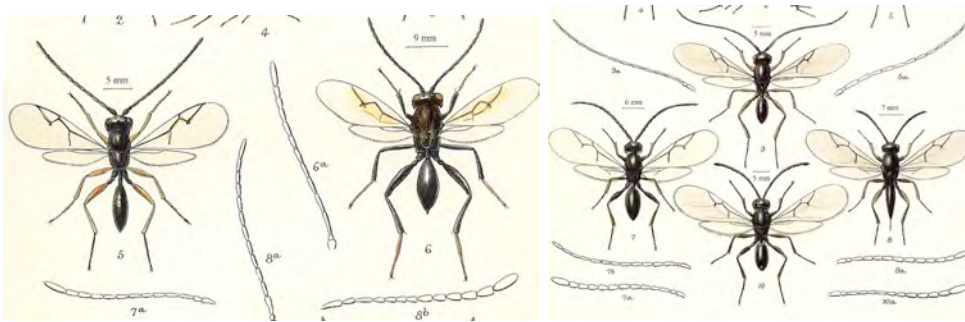
and consistency in its Gnostic distrust of the splendors of Creation. An incredible beauty and a particularly forceful poetic manifestation is the result. Famous for being ugly, sickly, alcoholic and addicted to opium, Stagnelius was likely – like Artaud later – taking drugs simply to ease the daily pain; yet the obsessiveness and the grandiose-tragic senses of absolute desire of the two poets cannot be a mere syndrome but will always be a unique and lonely fate.

A special place in our Stagnelius reception is held by the fairy tale comedy *Thorsten fiskare* – illustrated by Gösta Kriland, it was intended to be published by the Imaginists, but appeared only recently (with a preface by CO Hultén). We have also been marked by the horror tragedies *Albert och Julia* about love after death and *Riddartornet* about catastrophical family secrets. But in terms of the poems, we have hardly made a very original selection, it is the many famous anthology pieces that move us too. Ekelöf considered Stagnelius a Swedish Rimbaud, which might be a slightly schematic and projected idea, but also points to their convergence: to stand with an impossible clarity before the abysses revealed by a long and systematic disorder of the senses.

Prolific and extremely rich both quantitatively and qualitatively, Carl Jonas Love Almqvist provides most currents with something to relate to. Most important for us, and perhaps for romanticism, have been his early Swedenborgian little tale of analogical-cosmological pornography, *Murnis*, and the two well-known major "romantic fugues", the musically structured mixed-genre epics *Amorina* and *Drottningens juvelsmycke*. Their powerful polyphony, which integrates most aspects of romantic sensibility, including the humorous, monstrous and extremely violent alongside the hypersensible, pious, and visionary, makes them grand stories of the kind that, among other things, create both an immediate mythologisation (the landscapes, the situations, characters like Johannes and Tintomara...) and a characteristically dynamic romantic irony – here, humour is freed from the ambitions to entertain, ridicule or flatter, it is objectively incarnated in the ascendent dynamism of the approaching of contradictions, the intimate relationship between the grotesque and the serene. And despite the often architectural construction, it is all firmly based in a more or less mediumistic sense of writing; Almqvist insisted that it was all shown or dictated to him (in some hypnagogic sense).

Other among his most romantic or enigmatic works are the shorter "Guldfågel i paradiset", "Rosaura", "Arctura", "Ferrando Bruno" and "Skaldens natt". Most stories were integrated into the grand frame narrative of *Jaktslottet* in his series *Törnrosens bok*, and thus he made it possible to issue self-commentary and create additional romantic-ironic effects. However, a great part of Almqvist's early work consists of a somewhat bland excited exoticism, and his numerous later novels are even less ambitious and in fact they are quite typical of their time: tangled melodramas based on exoticism, emotions and sensation, a system of deception and revelation; simply what we know as popular culture. In his case though, it is built on a basis of solid romantic sensibility – which may still not be enough to give the pieces a poetic kind of coherence, but at least provides the obligatory horror scenes, love scenes, dream scenes and bottomless pain scenes with a level of credibility. Almqvist's aim was to entertain an audience so as to earn a living, sure, but also to spread his radical political ideas; and therefore many of his novels have unusual ingredients or caused major scandals. Most famously *Det går an*, advocating love without marriage, but not less *Tre fruar i Småland*, advocating Fourierist phalansteries to convert robbers, and others.

With an uncharacteristically sure aim, Almqvist reproached his friends (or ex-friends) for betraying the dynamics and poetic spirit of romanticism by becoming politically conservative! Back in the days of the romantic movement's struggle in Stockholm, Almqvist was the only active Swedenborgian, and in fact he had his own utopian-Swedenborgian sect with a circle of young disciples. Even though their farm experiment in Värmland actually was more of "proletarianisation" trip than a communist-utopian community, it too is an expression of the restless nonconformism of this decidedly un-smooth yet charismatic prophet. Eventually, escaping a trial for attempted murder of a moneylender, he spent the last decades of his life in the US. There he seems to have collaborated with the Swedenborgian historian of alchemy E A Hitchcock, a figure acknowledged in American surrealism, and he wrote a (less than brilliant) history of alchemy himself, integrated into the *Törnrosens bok* frame narrative.



Considered as the leader of the romantic movement, and sometimes a brilliant polemicist, Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom was still eager to go down in history as an ultrasensible and impractical soul. For a long time he was counted among the major romantics (though "effeminate"), but nowadays there is a campaign of dropping him from the position and depreciating his poetry for being incomprehensible. In fact his poems are major structures of farreaching analogy building up a living cosmos of smells, emotions and mythological figures, and he delivers the purest example of the new sense of poetry as an autonomous realm. The syncretic accumulation of mythologies and allusions in a tangled rhetorical frame is here not a puzzle to be solved, but instead a fragrant ether to bathe in, full of sensory detail and projected desire. If an allegory or a riddle, it is not one dependent on its decoding, it is not primarily to be understood on the conceptual level; but instead expecting a truly poetic meaning to emerge amidst this complexity and this blossoming overabundance. He was also the Swedish romantic most consciously cultivating the image of the new kind of literature and philosophy, focusing on poetic knowledge, as a major revelation announcing a new historical era - a thought also fuelling a well-recognisable vanguardism and self-mythologisation in his poetry. Wherever he went, verse were gushing forth from him, but his larger works is the suite of analogical interpretations of flowers, *Blommorna*, and his two dramatic poems, *Fågel Blå* and the grand paradisaical-tragic *Lycksalighetens ö*. As the leader of the movement and especially of its particular Uppsala incarnation, he was also the one romantic most eager to make peace and the quickest to grow peaceful, complacent and conservative; from his later years, his only readable work is his huge official romantic version of Swedish literary history, *Svenska siare och skalder*.

(Translations of Swedish writers into major languages are of course sparse. A few of Almqvist's novels are indeed available in English, French, German, Czech and whatnot. Any translations of poems are mostly hidden in anthologies and journals and not so easily located. Livijn's *Spader Dame* was translated in its own time, but there seems to be no modern foreign editions.)

### **Peripheries and borders**

Just to emphasise that there is a line drawn here, we could point to the fact that in official literary history Geijer, Wallin and Tegnér are also considered major Swedish romantics. Erik Gustaf Geijer was somewhat intermediate between the romanticist and classicist camps, focusing on the revival of old Nordic mythology, in a movement called "Geaticism" which is officially considered a romanticist forum, although not entirely accurately. Even though it did belong to the current considered in its widest sense, it organised many classicists too, and had a strangely impoverished range of concerns. Geijer was rather a peripheral member of the romantic movement during the major fights, but became more prominent afterwards in its decline. There, his romantic sensibility and refusal to stagnate made him assume very ambiguous political standpoints, and his advocacy of social reform at a time when his old comrades were opposing it was falsely publicised as a "defection". But clearly, to sort out his politics or to trace the complex role Hegelianism and even left-Hegelianism played for Geijer is not for us to do.

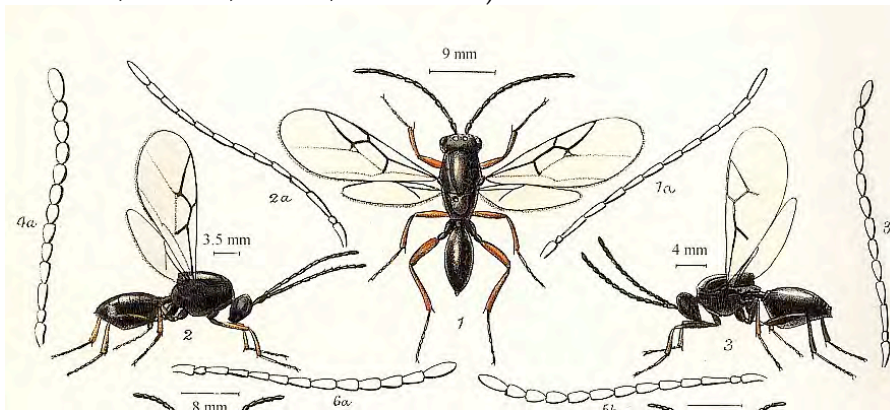
Wallin and Tegnér were both fierce antiromantics and classicists. But while there is nothing more to say about Wallin, Esaias Tegnér was a talented, complex and tortured soul, who had some parts of the romantic idea complex in him, such as excited Platonism and mythological syncretism, together with megalomania and "Geaticism". In fact, the famous "peace treaty" made after romanticism had won was largely a peace between Atterbom and Tegnér, as he was the only substantial opposing force left. A few of his maddest poems are rather magnificent (not just the famous poem to melancholy), but others such as the national epic *Fritthofs saga* consist of utterly bland boyhood fantasies and we don't mind leaving them to the Nazi canon...

Several of those considered "minor romantics" should be mentioned instead. Carl Fredrik Dahlgren was the master of the collapse of rationalisation through the breakdown of categories in farfetched allegories; he excelled in romantic irony and humorous over-the-top romantic effects; he is very readable but more of a hysterical clown than a visionary. At least he too exemplifies the new sense of poetry. While Vilhelm Fredrik Palmblad's novels are as exoticist and unbalanced in composition as anybody could wish, and include many ironic elements in their loose-ended torso, but with emotions and motives which are often still those of 18th century sentimentalism. Lorenzo Hammarsköld was the major organiser of the movement in Stockholm, and one of its angriest leading polemicists and critics, a great historian, uneven polemicist and rather poor poet. An undeniable beauty but nothing very remarkable can be found in some of the poems of the movement's only active female poet during the fighting years, Euphrosyne (Julia Nyberg); and something similar can be said for Pehr Elgström, the romantic who died the youngest. Adolph Törneros provided many significant real-life romantic shortstories-cum-anecdotes and visions in his letters and diaries. Very entertaining also are the wild incoherent splatter-style war poems of the Byronic military poet Gustaf Lorentz Sommelius (Beppo).

Yes, we shouldn't miss the opportunity to say something specifically about the *Markalls sömnlösa nätter* too, the two most important collective works of the Swedish romantics. The first volume was a grand satirical poem in Homeric style, about a battle where the Swedish classicist writers were slaughtered by the very giants of literary history that they were denying (such as Homer himself, Shakespeare, Cervantes and

Goethe). It was a clean blow, and it was after this that Atterbom and some others considered the literary fight over. Not so the more unruly among the Stockholm romantics. A second volume was written, a much looser and indeed quite incoherent composition elusively based in tropes of romantic irony, and probably more rooted in Apuleius than in the *Odyssey*, as it depicts the poor archenemy – a mediocre classicist critic named Wallmark – duplicated, both as transformed into an ass, and as the grotesque knight riding the poor creature, on their strange odyssey through the world. In the second volume ridicule is widened to target not only the classicist enemies but also Atterbom and the conciliatory Uppsala romantics, and eventually the no-good Stockholm cynics themselves.

Even though philosophy was an integral part of romanticism, the only person in Sweden who is acknowledged as a romanticist philosopher of any standing is Benjamin Höijer, who mediated German idealism for the romantics, developed a philosophical aesthetics, and paralleled some of Hegel's simultaneous or later efforts. Others, especially Geijer, Hammarsköld, Atterbom and Almquist, wrote on more or less philosophical subjects, but their major accomplishment in the field of humanities was to outline a history of ideas and a history of poetry, as opposed to the flat non-diachronic right-or-wrong of the classicists and of religious orthodoxy; they looked for historical evolution, the chain of influences, and the organic fruition of concepts and ideas (and indeed usually got carried away by their organic paradigms, of course not yet knowing much about the mechanisms of historical conditions) and did not just connect the available dots but actively investigated both low or hidden genres (hermetic philosophy, mysticism and magic, ballads and folktales, drinking songs, etc) and a wealth of exotic religions and mythologies (Greek, Nordic, Neoplatonic, gnostic, hermetic, Persian, Hindu, Buddhist...).



Romanticists were of course not only active in the humanities; many were natural scientists, and especially in biology it made sense to emphasise evolution and organic coherence. The botanist Carl Adolph Agardh was among the fighting romantics, while others such as Johan Wilhelm Zetterstedt (botanist and entomologist) and Elias Fries (known as the father of mycology) more peacefully applied romantic perspectives in their research. This biological romanticism was also supported by the many older "pre-romantics" among Linnaeus's disciples, who were often Swedenborgians and sometimes active utopians (Leonhard Gyllenhal, CJ Schönherr, Adam Afzelius, GJ Billberg, etc). However, unlike romantic biologists in many other countries, no one in Sweden formulated a theory of evolution of their own.

The only one in the romantic circles who has gone down in history as a practicing alchemist (only recently "outed" by CM Edenborg) was the speculative swedenborgian language and mythology scholar Fabian Wilhelm Ekenstam (identified by his friend Atterbom as "the Swedish von Baader").

There was a strong sense of romanticism in music and in painting, too, but with surprisingly few organic connections to the other genres or central concerns of the romantic movement. Yet romantic composers like J C F Haeffner and later Adolf Fredrik Lindblad in Uppsala, stood for something partly new in music, and some of the romantic poets also wrote music (Geijer and Almqvist). In painting, Sweden had nothing of the visionary romanticism of a Runge or a Friedrich; only Carl Johan Fahlcrantz seemed to paint dramatically animated landscapes at all, actually of the same 18th century romantic type as his great teacher Elias Martin; while the painter most hailed as their own by the romantics was a curious guy named Pehr Hörberg.

Swedish-language romanticism was also present in Finland, which had then only recently been snatched from the Swedish empire by its Russian counterpart. While the fight was going on in Sweden, it was eagerly supported by the Turku romantics (Arvidsson, Linsén, Gottlund, Tengström and others, disciples of the "pre-romantic" poet Franzén, publishing *Aura* and *Mnemosyne*), and afterwards there was an established circle of Helsinki romantics (Runeberg, Snellman, Cygnaeus, Lönnroth and others). It seems that in terms of poetry most of this was somewhat less colourful than its Swedish models. Except in the case of collecting folk poetry, where the ballads and folktales gathered in Sweden by Geijer, Arvid A Afzelius, Leonard Rääf and others were often luminous, although nowhere near as powerful as the Finnish traditional epic the *Kalevala*, meticulously assembled from local scraps and variations by Elias Lönnroth.

A question of circumscription is also presented by Western Pomerania (Vorpommern), a part of Germany that was Swedish at the time. There, during the first years of the 19th century, at the university of Greifswald, the famous German romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich considered himself half Swedish, and had some contact with the ageing Thomas Thorild, who had ended up there as a broken philosopher (after a formal pardon from his exile from Sweden).

Unlike in the German romantic movement, in spite of Euphrosyne's poems mentioned above, no women played an obviously important role in the Swedish romantic movement's dynamic years (except when Germaine Staël von Holstein and Amalia von Helwig visited and brought influences from abroad). However, some became central as organisers in the guise of salon hostesses after its domestication, and in late romanticism several important female novelists emerged too.

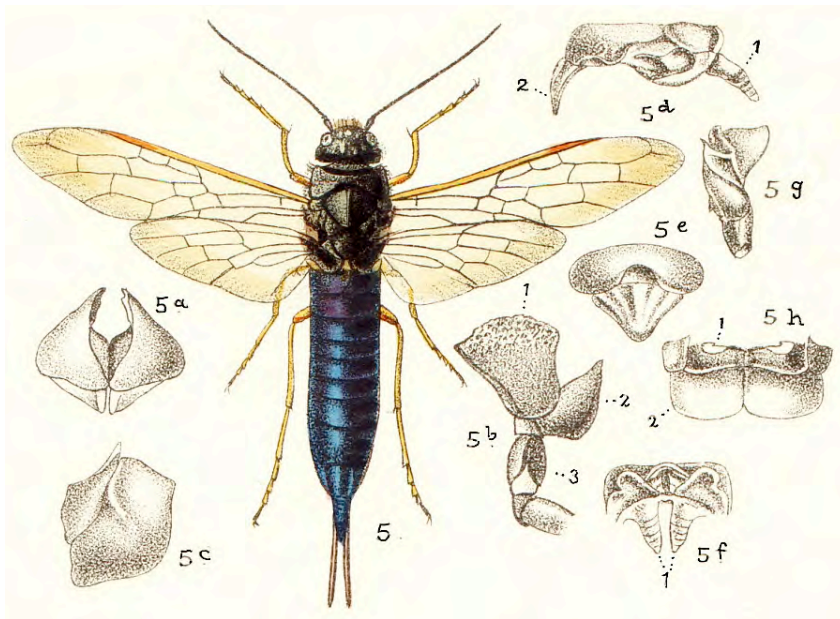
Indeed, more or less melodramatic novels was the main literary form in which a romantic tradition continued after the battles ceased; in the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s Almqvist published profusely and was joined by rather important writers such as Emilie Flygare-Carlén, August Blanche, Viktor Rydberg, Sofie von Knorring, and the feminist pioneer Fredrika Bremer, who was indeed rather solidly Biedermeier but not without more dynamically romantic aspects.

## Heritage

Not only was a new sense of poetry brought about, but there were also various other major shifts – some subsequently more or less integrated into consensus views, others integral to ongoing oppositional viewpoints concerned with poetry like that of surrealism – including the entire disciplines of history of literature, history of ideas, philosophical aesthetics, transcendental philosophy, non-mechanistic psychology, non-confessional mysticism, comparative religion, evolution, etc. Open rationalism, intimately linked with a new sense of poetry, one that is an autonomous force and entire realm, yet integrated into all genres of expression and into living in general, and indeed central to knowledge; it was indeed this sense of poetry that was taken up by the symbolists and some of the modernist movements, and insistently connected with other historic lines of radicalism through to surrealism.

Note:

Should anyone for some reason need some references to the various published traces of our romanticism reception, it was first suggested in the mythology text in *Nakna läppar* #1 1987 (by MF and BJ), and explored in the big historical section (by CME and BJ) in *Mannen på gatan* #1 1991. Furthermore it was utilised in the *Köttets poesi* anthologies (with their introductions by CME), in the Vertigo edition of the classic German romantic fragments (with a comprehensive postface by MF), in the presentation of Livijn in *Kvicksand* 1988 (by CME), and in the Ellerström edition of Clas Livijn's translation of Tieck's *Mästerkatten, eller Katten i stöflor* (edited by CME). CME's academic research on Ekenstam was first published in *Personhistorisk tidskrift* 1997 and then integrated in his PhD thesis *Alkemins skam* 2002.



(The images are W Purkiss' litographic illustrations to Peter Cameron's *A monograph of British Phytophagous Hymenoptera* 1882-1890)