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*NATIONAL ROMANTICISM AND THE SWEDISH
LANDSCAPE
Swedish Art of the 1890s*

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ABSTRACT

The essay explores the overall pattern and stylistic aspects of Swedish art in the 1890s. The stylistic development leading up to the emergence of National Romanticism is discussed on two levels. Firstly, the characteristics of Naturalism are discussed, as well as Sweden's relations to foreign countries, in particular France. Secondly, the development of landscape art is provided. The main part of the essay is dedicated to the importance of nature and its expression in art. Quotations and references to social and literary activities to reach a full understanding of the art support the analysis. The catalogue is a complement to the essay and gives relevant biographical data as well as more specific information of the works included in the exhibition.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Art historically, Sweden has experienced two "Golden Ages". During these periods the artistic standard reached new heights. They occurred in the middle of the 18th c and in the last two decades of the 19th c.¹ Stylistically, the 1880s had been dominated by Naturalism, mainly influenced by France. Swedish artists had, in the decades leading up to the 1880s, in increasing numbers, left their country to seek impulses from abroad. The 1890s saw the reaction against Naturalism, mainly directed towards the stylistic objectivity, promoted by Naturalism. Simultaneously, Swedish artists who had previously lived in France, began to return to their own country. During the Naturalistic era, the artistic emphasis had been on the feeling of community, which was now replaced by the emphasis on the individuality of each artist. The result of the changes taken place, was a stylistic change into a neo romantic, atmospheric and in some cases symbolist art. Artists abandoned Naturalistic ideals, such as objectivity which was now perceived as a dispassionate view of the subjects. Nature as such was not rejected, instead it was infused with a deeper level of meaning. In order for the artist to achieve this, the pictorial vocabulary needed to be changed, as well as the subject-matter they chose to paint; "but the relationship between the artists and their natural subjects remained intensified, as they explored the margins between perceived nature and inner feelings."² In many cases the artist became a dreamer and

¹P.v Swedish Artists 1880-1900

²P.18 Dreams of a Summer Night.

introspective, seeking to comprehend the depths of the soul. It is important to note that National Romanticism and strong nationalistic feelings was not unique to Sweden at this time, but a phenomenon found in much of Europe.

Gauguin's rejection of Naturalism and Impressionism in 1886-8, in favour of imagined subjects, painted in an emphatically flat, anti-illusionist manner had an enormous impact on the Swedish artists. Landscapes were a favoured subject-matter for Swedish artists and it became the most painted genre. The returning artists regarded Swedish nature as a symbol for the Swedish character. Not only did nature play an important role in the development of painting. There was a strong and important link between literature and art, which had recourse on the aestheticism of the 1890s. The division between art and literature was seen as artificial, as they shared a mutual objective.³ August Strindberg, a driving force in the cultural climate, wrote in the 1880s how; "the Swedes were in the process of abandoning their true mission in order to let themselves be Frenchified. Landscape painters, continued the author, have certainly made technical progress. But they were warned against adopting the French-Spanish palette, with its chremnitz-white light. For colours are completely different in different countries for geological and meteorological reasons".⁴Towards the end of the century there did emerge a completely new art, an art in search for the Swedish soul.

³P.152 Böcklin

⁴P.45 The Light of the North

2. BACKGROUND - Naturalism and the French Connection

2.1 International Exchanges

Although Sweden is geographically peripheral, it has played an active and sometimes dominant role in continental Europe. During the 17th c Sweden ruled over most of Scandinavia and the Baltic, as well as northern Germany. However, its borders gradually receded and in the late 19th c, it had become very much the country we see today. At the turn of the century, Sweden and Denmark were the only independent countries. Finland was ruled by Russia and Norway was unified with Sweden.⁵ The union with Norway, which was dissolved in 1905, caused much tension. It contributed to a strong patriotic feeling in Norway. Many artists of the progressive groups in Sweden supported the Norwegian fight for independence.

Over the centuries, there has been frequent international and artistic exchanges between Sweden and the continent. Regular contacts between Stockholm and Paris began in the mid-17th c, when Queen Christina of Sweden inspired her court with French visitors. One of the most important events occurred in 1732. The Swedish Royal director of Fine Arts, Carl Hårleman, invited the French artist, Guillaume Taraval. Together they founded the Royal Swedish Drawing Academy in 1735. Its structure was based on the hierarchical principles of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and funded

⁵P.2 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

by the State.⁶ The strong cultural dependence of France in the 18th c, was further reinforced when important paintings by François Boucher and Charles-Joseph Natoire entered Swedish collections. Soon after the establishment of the Drawing Academy, Alexander Roslin (1718-1793) began his studies there (Figure 1). He later moved to France where he had a successful career as a much sought after portraitist. One of Roslin's compatriots Gustav Lundberg, who had spent 30 years in Paris, returned to Sweden in 1745, bringing with him influences from France. He had been elected member of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.⁷ The exchange continued and the 19th c saw increasing number of artists travel to France.

2.2 The Swedish Exodus

In the 1880s Swedish art received international acclaim. Impressionism had little appeal to the Swedish artists and most followed the Naturalist idiom. During the decades leading up to the 1880s a great number of artists had left Sweden and settled abroad, mainly in France but also in Germany. The Swedish community in France reached its peak during the 1880s. The Swedes and other Scandinavians were successfully represented at the Paris Salon.

The colonisation had gathered momentum in the 1870s inspired by a search for a new type of art to be found in France. They were tired of history

⁶P.7 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

⁷P.8-9 Ibid.

painting, studio art and sentimental genre paintings with mannered and excessive compositions in depicting nature. The artists reacted against this academic view of nature. They wanted a new type of landscape painting and a new type of realism. This development was paralleled in literature. In 1872 August Strindberg wrote; "Complete reality in art, poetry, yes in all life's situations, this is what we need after the past decades sick and false idealism, which one read in poetry of that time"⁸.

The first artist to seriously be involved with the new French art was Alfred Wahlberg, (1834-1906). Between 1857-62 he studied at the art academy in Düsseldorf. In 1866 he left for Paris to be inspired by the Barbizon School. During the 1830s the Barbizon had renewed French landscape painting by breaking with Classicism and Romanticism. These artists studied the intense light and atmosphere and arrived at an intimate description of nature and a less rigid composition. Figure 2, shows an example of Corot's (1796-1875) lyrical landscapes, painted in the 1860s. His influence caused a liberation of Wahlberg's art and he developed the lyrical, rich palette, which became his style (Figure 3). Rather soon in Paris he gained recognition and was appreciated by both critics and public. However, the works he sent to Sweden did not get the same positive reception. Nevertheless, the break with the old was firmly established and the young generation followed Wahlberg to Paris.⁹ Wahlberg had become an important contact for younger Swedish artists, and the following decades saw a

⁸P.52 Den Svenska Historien

⁹P.52-53Ibid.

constant Swedish colony in Paris. Carl Fredrik Hill (1849-1911) followed him in the 1870s (Figure 4). He too sought inspiration from Corot and the Barbizon school.

The generation, which were to produce the National Romantic art, arrived in Paris in the 1880s. The first generation consisted among others of; Richard Bergh, Carl Larsson, Nils Kreuger, Karl Nordström, Prince Eugen, Anders Zorn and Bruno Liljefors. They went to Paris to pursue a fascination with the modernist trends to be found there. It was not only artistic dreams that drove the Swedish artists to France. They escaped a country they perceived as claustrophobic and isolated.

2.3 Naturalism and Plein-air Painting

“Naturalism began in the late 1870s, reached its apogee at the Paris Exposition Universelle 1889 and subsided by the early 1890s – the movement was not immediately pushed aside by more modernist styles”.¹⁰ It had links with literature and such writers as Emile Zola in France and August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen in Scandinavia. Painters had developed a formula, a set of shared characteristics that could be used to compose a painting. One of these characteristics were the isolation and sharpening of details. It related to Emile Zola’s method of emphasizing facts to create a textural image.¹¹The

¹⁰p.7 Beyond Impressionism

¹¹p.8 Ibid.

Naturalists stresses the importance of being contemporary and selected themes drawn from daily life, sometimes mundane. "All that was subjective in a painting – temperament- should be eliminated, and in its place should be objectivity and neutrality."¹²This statement refers mainly to Bastien-Lepage, but as he was regarded as the most important exponent of Naturalism, it has a general value. First hand experience and authenticity were paramount. This goal was now within reach for the artists, mainly due to the availability of photography. Their art was very much perceived as being photographs; "Naturalist artists created a style that could be read at a glance. People saw these canvases as accurate, objective reflections of the real world. These paintings were precise in every detail, and the Naturalists prided themselves on their objective description."¹³In their choice of subject-matter and in their objective description, the Naturalist painters were seen as defying academic rules in their aim for a modern style. This aim led to the creation of artistic association and in setting up of alternative exhibitions.¹⁴

The Swedish artists, following the Naturalist dictum, found themselves painting predominantly French motifs on French soil. The actual painting process took place out of doors – plein air - and the models were completely integrated into the surrounding environment.

¹²P.14 The Swedish Vision – Landscape and figurative painting 1885-1920

¹³P.10 Beyond Impressionism

¹⁴P.9 The Mystic North

2.3.1 Influences from Jules Bastien-Lepage

One of the most admired French artists at the time was Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884). His breakthrough had come at the Salon of 1873. He documented the mundane realities of peasant existence, without any traces of heroism. This distances him from other artists, such as Millet (Figure 5). Bastien-Lepage's art is recognizable for its convincing open-air description and loose brushwork to enhance the realism of the figures. His complex style involved using the landscape in such a way that it deliberately alluded to Japanese art. The spatial tensions are heightened by his use of perspective, combining close-up to panorama by placing his figures in vast spaces. One of his first examples of Naturalism was *Les Foins*, (Figures 6) which caused strong reactions from the viewing public. "The sheer physical presence of the peasant figures appeared to confront the spectator, which astonished the salon audience."¹⁵ Towards the end of his life, he had achieved a unique position in European painting, and a school had begun to emerge in the early 1880s. Eva Bonnier was one of the female artists living in Paris in the 1880s, and a close friend of Richard Bergh's. In a letter to her parents, she expressed the popularity for and admiration of, the art of Bastien-Lepage among the Swedish artists. In 1885 she visited the commemorative exhibition for Bastien-Lepage and described the event as one of the most extraordinary art experiences she had ever had, and how impressed she was by his artistic

¹⁵P.111-112 Hommage à Jules Bastien-Lepage

greatness and originality.¹⁶One example of his long lasting impact on Swedish art is a painting from 1892 by Zorn (Figure 7). It adopts a similar composition as *Les Foins*; the horizon is placed high, and greenery occupies the main part of the surface.

¹⁶P.105 Pariserbref

3. OPPOSITION TO THE ACADEMY

In Sweden as indeed other countries, the Art Academies and museums were synonymous with the establishment. The young artist's revolt against the establishment originated in a dissatisfaction based on the opinion that acquisitions made and rewards given by these associations were either of minor art or unjust.¹⁷The Academy was further criticized for organizing too few exhibitions. The substantial acquisition, made with funds from a lottery fund, in 1885 was of paintings by such established artists as Gustaf Cederström (1845-1933) (Figure 8), which may serve as an illustration of the taste of the Academy.

The artists, who after studies in Paris returned to Sweden, was met by opposition from the established art institutions when they exhibited their work. This animosity from both sides and tension between them, resulted in a redefinition of the artist standing in society. The artist's opposition was organised and demands were raised for greater influence in defining their work circumstances. It was during this period the foundations for the Nordic art world of today was formed.¹⁸

Erland Josephson was the driving force behind the Opponent Group (Figure 9). In two articles, published in November 1884 in Dagens Nyheter; "Om den konstnärliga uppfostran i Stockholm" (On the education of Artists in Stockholm) and "Ännu ett ord om den konstnärliga uppfostran i Stockholm"

¹⁷P.35 Northern Light – Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting 1880-1910

¹⁸P.29 Dreams of a Summer Night

(Yet another word about the education of artists in Stockholm), he declared what he thought was the purpose of art. The most important role was to; interpret nature, secondly; to be allowed an independently and unconstrained creativity, and lastly; art should reflect its times. He suggested three main actions to reorganize the art schools. Firstly, the students themselves would elect their teachers. The reason was to create trust on a friendly basis between students and teachers. Secondly, the teachers would be elected on two years and were under no circumstances to remain beyond that period, even if students so wished. Lastly, the award system was to be administered by the students.¹⁹ Even by today's standards these were very radical demands and Josephson's fellow artists saw the articles as exaggerated. However, the articles did force them into action and in March 1885, a petition was signed.

To further contest the influence of the Academy, an exhibition entitled *From the Banks of Seine* was held in Stockholm. It was organized by Josephson and Bergh and opened 1 April 1885. Much of the preparation work took place in Paris. Among the 18 exhibiting artists were works by Bergh, Josephson, Liljefors, Larsson, Nordström, Zorn and Kreuger. The exhibition received good press and Gustaf af Geijerstam wrote in *Dagens Nyheter*; "For the first time, an art exhibition attracts the same kind of interest as a new book by Strindberg".²⁰ The exhibited art works had little thematic compatibility. Karl Nordström, for instance, was represented by *Garden in Grez* (Figure 10) and Josephson's by *Spanish Blacksmiths* (Figure 11). He

¹⁹P.189 Konstnärstörbundet Historia

²⁰P.199 Ibid.

executed two versions of this painting in Seville. *Spanish Blacksmiths* is the most typical representation of Josephson's Naturalistic art. The reception was harsh and the critics were as so often when it came to Josephson's art negative, probably provoked by the social realistic elements.

In 1896, during the era of National Romanticism, Richard Bergh reflected on the view that Naturalistic art lacked in emotion and atmosphere, when he wrote about *The Garden in Grez*; "It was sensations, not emotions, that his art evoked, it speaks to the eye, not the soul. Sensations of real sunlight, real shadows, real green and pouring water, enlivened the nature."²¹ *From the Banks of Seine* was followed by another exhibition a couple of months later, entitled; *The Opponent Exhibition*. Just as the first exhibition had received good press and attracted many visitors, so did the latter. However, for Josephson it was yet another set back. Again, he received negative criticism, this time for *The Water Sprite* (Plate 6). Nils Kreuger, on the other hand, received positive press for *Snow in Paris* (Figure 12). It displays a certain amount of social awareness, but is foremost a study of light. Cold winter blue light blending in with the light from the gas-lamp.

The Opponent Group and its activities led to the creation of the formal organization; The Artists Association, in August 1886. Its foremost purpose was to, within the nation's art and craft, encourage new reforms and eliminate, what they saw as; harmful traditions.²² Its method of existence was to set up recurrent exhibitions, in Sweden as well as the Nordic countries. The

²¹p.208 1880-tal i Nordiskt Måleri

²²p.241 Konstnärslöbunds Historia

Artists Association had its seat in both Paris and Stockholm. A contributing factor for the success of the group was the strong support it had from leading writers and indeed, wealthy patrons such as Pontus Fürstenberg. Swedish Opponent Artists enjoyed considerable success at the Universal Exposition in Paris in 1889, where they exclusively represented Sweden. "On that occasion their works received much critical acclaim and a host of medals and Honorable Mentions".²³

²³P.13 The Swedish Vision – Landscape and Figurative painting 1885-1920

4. NATIONAL ROMANTICISM - The Early Signs

Most of the artists mentioned in the essay lived or visited Paris during the dynamic 1880s. They can be grouped in three groups, only for descriptive reasons and based on their reaction to the new influences. The first group are Bruno Liljefors, Anders Zorn and Carl Larsson who were established and successful artists in the 1880s. They took on certain elements of the new trend of the 1890s, but had matured as artists earlier and largely set in their respective style. The second group include Richard Bergh, Karl Nordström, Prince Eugen and Nils Kreuger. They were the most progressive artists of the new style, though producing highly individualistic art, they shared a common purpose. Bergh, Nordström and Kreuger formed the Varberg-group which were to shape landscape painting. Prince Eugen was part of forming the Swedish symbolic landscape, but did not take part in any opponent group, due to his social rank. The remaining artists mentioned in the essay do not belong to any group, and produced highly individualistic art. It includes Ernst Josephson, Eugene Jansson, Gustaf Fjaestad, Carl Wilhelmson and August Strindberg. Ernst Josephson is today regarded as one of the most talented artist from the 1880s. His remarkable *Water Sprite* was years ahead of the National Romantic style to come. Eugene Jansson was of the same generation as the other National Romantic artists, but never lived in Paris. He spent most of his life in Stockholm. Gustaf Fjaestad was slightly younger than the others

and developed his mature style during the 1890s, without having had first hand experience of the 1880s. Carl Wilhelmson, having lived in Paris, returned to his native province where he painted mainly rural people. August Strindberg produced individualistic and expressionistic art.

“There was a unity of purpose among National Romantic painters but little stylistic unity, because they were more concerned with ideas than with appearance and because they believed in the importance of individualism, which they considered compatible with social democracy”.²⁴ With industrialism and the growth of wealth the gap between the social classes widened. Many intellectuals and artists sympathized with the workers and their fight against social injustice and demand for equal rights.²⁵ Carl Larsson together with the majority of artists at this time, was a socialist, which he declared in a letter to an unknown correspondent, 1882. “Don’t think that I am an indolent slave even though I wear a gaudy suit in gay colours and a laughing mask. If you knew what my life and my gallant battle for existence were like, you would know that I am not going to stay where I am now. But it isn’t my goal as you suggest to paint expensive pictures in a big country. No, I have two characteristics: I am Swedish and –shudder- a socialist. I want to serve and gladden, but all and not just one.”²⁶

The foundations for modern Sweden were put in place by the enormous social and cultural changes at this time. There was no revolution in the French sense. The fight for equality was achieved by moral education

²⁴P.5 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination.

²⁵P.12 The Swedish vision – Landscape and Figurative painting 1885-1920

²⁶P.35 Northern Light: Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting 1880-1910

based on old folk poetry and neo humanistic ideals, combined with the rejection of the life style and over consumption of the upper classes. Two of Sweden's most acclaimed poets; Tegnér and Geijer were leaders of this development. "Tegnér's *Frithiofs Saga* showed how greatness lay in conquering oneself, not in overthrowing the establishment. Geijer glorified the Nordic peasant's simple pride and freedom, and explicitly compared Greece and the Nordic Countries".²⁷

4.1 Return of the International Artists

The reawakened nationalistic feeling contributed to the return of the artists in the 1890s. There was an increased negative feeling towards France building up in the Swedish colony. Combined with the influence from Gauguin's search for primitive life in Tahiti, it was natural for the Swedes to look to their own country and its wilderness, mountains and rivers. There was a renewed interest in folklore and national legends which were seen as holders of the same wisdom as the great world religions.²⁸

Bergh moved to Paris to get away "from the land of barbarians, away from ice and snow, away from all coarse excesses, away from ourselves" convinced that Sweden was a "country without motifs - where is the architectonic or painterly unity that makes the landscape of the south, with its

²⁷P.51 Dreams of a Summer Night

²⁸P.40 Ibid.

clear serene lines, so seductive to artists – not here”.²⁹ Only a few years later his feeling for the Swedish landscape had changed. It was now a mirror into which he could search for his soul and part of himself. He expressed the feeling when he wrote to a friend while in Florence where he stood listening on a hill outside Florence, “the rushing of the wind in the stone pines suddenly made him feel as if he had been moved to the silent white land in the north”. The stone pines and cypresses were not his; “No, spruce and pine, they are of the same stuff as my own kin – we are brothers” He would never be able to depict Italy’s landscape “with the same warmth and devotion with which [he] would be able to interpret one of the harshest, roughest mountains ridges of the North”.³⁰

This realization was part of the reason for many of the artists of the 1880s to return to Sweden. But it was not easy to adjust their way of painting to the Swedish landscape. They found it difficult to apply the techniques learnt in France, to the light and nature in Sweden. In two articles Bergh writes about the difficulties encountered by the artists on their return.³¹ “Without the mediating silvery mist that makes the French atmosphere so painterly”, asks Bergh, “how is the northern artists to paint this confusion of mountains and hills. In the north there are only oppositions, no harmony, no unifying tonalities, only dissonant local colours”.³²

The artists returned to a cultural transformation. This cultural change involved the search for equality between the classes, that engaged and united

²⁹P.146 Om Konst och Annat

³⁰P.46 The Light of the North

³¹P.38 The Mystic North

both artists and writers. The “new moral” was a revival of old values and traditions. It was targeting the life style of the upper classes. M. Facos explains the success of the National Romantics call for change; “Their success was facilitated by a Swedish belief system that incorporated a primitive identification with nature, a unique notion of equality and a willingness to compromise. This ideology was grounded in eco-centrism, a view of nature in which no species occupies a privileged niche. Its goal was to promote a national identity by preserving indigenous culture, tradition and values”.³³In 1896 Zorn settled in Dalarna. In order to maintain the native traditions found in the rural areas artists turned away from the cities towards more rustic, rural milieu. Besides Anders Zorn, Carl Larsson also settled in Dalarna. Artists such as Zorn, Strindberg and Prince Eugen spent summers in the archipelago outside Stockholm. Carl Wilhelmson on return from France went back to Bohuslän. Varberg, where Kreuger, Nordström and Bergh settled is on the West-coast of Sweden and a very rural town. The artists sought for the wilderness and returned to their own home provinces to find motifs that reflected their Swedishness.

4.2 The Symbolist Influence

From about 1890, Symbolist painting appeared in Swedish art. Its influence came directly from Paris. The artists who had lived in France where

³²p.39 The Mystic North

³³p.3 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

exposed to the Symbolist ideas and they remained to intellectually gravitated towards France. However, many of the opponent artists spoke German and occasionally travelled to Germany.³⁴ There were those who regarded Symbolism as a northern trend. The reason was the perceived theoretical links with the mysticism of Swedenborg. "Symbolism's mystical aspect, along with its emphasis on the idea of purity, appealed greatly to Nordic nature-worshippers".³⁵

There was an increased German influence on the Scandinavian and Swedish artists in the 1890s. The influence mainly came from the secessionist movements in Berlin and Munich. The vitalizing of museums in Berlin and Hamburg contributed to attract outside interest, as well as the intellectual climate in general. Edvard Munch and Akselli Gallen-Kallela were two Scandinavians who exhibited there. August Strindberg frequently visited Berlin, and German artists went to Scandinavia.³⁶ Böcklin along with Puvis de Chavannes were important artistic sources for the Swedish National Romantic painters prior to 1892.

³⁴p.119 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

³⁵p.31 The Light of the North

³⁶p.7 En Glömd Relation

4.2.1 Puvis De Chavannes (1828-1898)

It was from the mid 1880s that one can begin to see a change in style among the Swedish artists. Puvis de Chavannes exerted a great influence on Swedish painting. The difficulties in capturing the unique northern light encountered by many returning artists, were overcome by influences from Puvis de Chavannes. Such works as the sacral landscapes of Puvis de Chavannes (Figure 13), held the key to resolve many of those difficulties. They were able to produce scenes, in an artistic manner, of the twilight landscape of the North.³⁷ Some of the influence from Puvis de Chavannes is found in the suppression of finer details in favour of a broader rendering of form to soften the effects of light. The effect of the softened light conveys a stillness and silence and gives the colours a deeper tonality. Puvis represents a very different art from other Symbolists as he wanted to give new life to the academic tradition. He appealed to those who wanted to follow modern ideas without losing touch with established orthodoxy. In the late 1860s and in the 1870s he received a number of important official commissions and in 1884 he painted *The Sacred Wood*, and was hailed "the greatest master of our time."³⁸

³⁷P.48 The Light of the North

³⁸P.83 Symbolist Art

4.2.2 Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901)

It was probably Böcklin's sensitivity to nature that gave his art its characteristics and what most attracted the Swedes. Henry Thode, a highly esteemed art critic explained Böcklin's art as; "being perceived as genuine because it possessed the emotional width as well as being profound and universal". It displayed; "love to nature and not least it had resisted the dangers of Impressionism".³⁹ The art critics had, in Böcklin's art found a continuous development from a conventional depiction of nature to a deeper understanding of nature. Prince Eugen was among the artists who admired Böcklin and was influenced by him for a long time. "Throughout the 1890s critics also detected, if in a less defined way, the influence of Böcklin, who for the young symbolist generation was something of a hero because of his willingness during the Naturalist period freely to reorganize nature for idealist and poetic purposes".⁴⁰ Arnold Böcklin's enormous popularity in Scandinavia may seem surprising today. Munch wrote to his Danish friend Johan Rohde, "No matter what complete rubbish art there is here in Germany, in general. It does have one advantage; It has produced individual artists who are so much above the others and are so lonely; for example Böcklin, who I believe is above all the others".⁴¹ Böcklin's art was perceived as having profound resonance, which contributed to his popularity. The artist had given the answers to the existential questions with a profound interpretation of the

³⁹P.34 En Glömd Relation

⁴⁰P.63 Prins Eugens Konst

⁴¹P.42 Ide och Innehåll i Edvard Munchs Konst

myths. His art merged the myth of Antiquity with the Germanic folklore. The most famous paintings by Böcklin were *Der Heilige Hain* 1882 (Figure 14), and *Totensinsel* 1883 (Figure 15).⁴²

4.3 The Emergence of National Romanticism

Following the trend in other European countries the Swedish National Romantics wished to create an art that expressed the national identity in a common culture and history. It was combined with influences of French Symbolism and Synthetism to create the Swedish National Romantic art. The cause for the shift from Naturalism to National Romanticism was complex, but the effects displayed in the choice of subject-matter and technique were obvious. There was an increasing focus on each countries national characteristics and culture combined with the view that Naturalistic method was insufficient when expressing the relationship between man and nature in the northern countries.⁴³ One example of the nationalistic feeling in Sweden was the creation of the first open-air museum, Skansen. It opened in 1891 and was mainly an attempt to revive the traditional folk cultures. Together with the Nordic Museum they were to have ideological as well as aesthetic influence on culture and the political structure in Sweden, but also internationally. The Nordic Museum, basically a historical museum, was used

⁴²P.43 En Glömd Relation

⁴³P.18 Dreams of a Summer Night

as a meeting place for May Day rallies by the socialist workers and their sympathisers. Not far away on Djurgården, the middle class would visit Skansen. These institutions would thereby adopt political significance in the class conflicts.⁴⁴

The movement was helped by the cultural climate in Sweden which created an intensity by being supported by middle-class writers and artists who worked together to form the National Romanticism. As a result of the school reform implemented in the mid 19th c, the level of literacy was almost universal. Writers were therefore able to reach out to many layers of Swedish society.⁴⁵ The result was shown in the reaction against the Academy in the 1880s which fuelled the ongoing dynamism and creativity that span over the whole of society. The lively exchange between artists, writers and musicians was essential to the vitality of Swedish art in the 1890s. Not only the cultural elite but also the industry was involved in the cultural dynamism. Many of the industries and large companies, present in Sweden today, were founded in the last decades of the century. This meant an increase wealth that took the form of commissions and creations of private collections. Ernest Thiel and Pontus Fürstenberg were especially active in supporting the young artists. Ernest Thiel was one of the wealthiest men in Sweden around the turn of the century and a strong supporter of the National Romantics.⁴⁶ As early as at the Paris Salon of 1884, there were some indications of the atmospheric art to come. Pontus Fürstenberg bought Nils Kreuger's *Vårplöjning* (*Spring Plowing*

⁴⁴p.21 Swedish Folk Art

⁴⁵p.5 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

⁴⁶p.15 Så levde de

1884)(Figure 16). It has a rhythm of line and the grey-blue twilight anticipates the decorative landscape art to come. In the following decade Kreuger were to expressed his belonging to Sweden, through images of people working the land.

Heidenstam, a writer of nationalistic literature, expressed the general feeling for Naturalism and its analytical objectivity at this time; "Naturalism is the art of suffocating imagination and feeling of never being witty; of never using an illuminating metaphor. In other words, of bringing that most important part of the human mind into disrepute. The teachings of the older school no longer fill us with enthusiasm".⁴⁷He wanted to replace naturalism's faith in reality with fantasy, imagination and spirituality "the age is thirsting for joy". His quest was for "the logic of the imagination" where art was the expression of the imagination. He had found it in Erland Josephson's *The Water Sprite* (Plate 6) 'but the thirst of joy could also lead to melancholy and introspection".⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Renässans

⁴⁸P.14 The Swedish Vision – Landscape and figurative painting 1885-1920

5. DEPICTION OF SWEDISH LIFE

The way the National Romantic artists sought to communicate with the viewer - inherently to a Swedish audience – has been identified by M. Facos as two-tired; “Firstly, they concentrated on typically or uniquely Swedish subjects. Secondly, they evolved technical and compositional strategies to convey Swedish cultural ideas subliminally”. She further states that their belief; “grew out of [] a reality beyond the visible world”.⁴⁹The choice of subject-matter was brought about from the strong nationalistic feeling, enhanced by years spent abroad. They appeared to have been leading a rather secluded life abroad. Socially they tended to interact with other Scandinavian artists and did not always make an effort to learn the language.

Carl Larsson was never permanently living in Paris, but often a visitor to the Swedish colony. His watercolours of home life in Sweden were extremely popular. Besides being nationalistic in subject-matter, they also reflected the renewed interest in Swedish folk art and decoration. Despite denying influences from England and the ideas of arts and crafts movements, it seems likely that they did play a part in his paintings and interior decorations. In the text attached to the illustrations, Carl Larsson stressed; “that the roots of his domestic aesthetic were in Swedish national traditions”.⁵⁰The most important commission of this period was the decoration of the National Museum. The murals were completed 1896-97 and were

⁴⁹p.5 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

⁵⁰p.25 Dreams of a Summer Night

painted by Carl Larsson. The subject-matter was inspired by Swedish art history and presented in a symbolic and decorative manner.⁵¹

Anders Zorn was another artist who chose to depict Swedish traditions, such as the midsummer night feast. However, besides his many portraits his most recurring theme was of the female nude. His contemporary A Renoir (1841-1919) shared this fascination (Figure 17). The female nude is a classical subject, Zorn's and Renoir's nudes represent the 19th c confirmation of this tradition. However, a comparison reveals many differences between their approach. Zorn's nudes are unlike Renoir's confrontational, sometimes threatening. Other nudes by Zorn seems distant, almost blending in and becoming part of the landscape.⁵² He often placed them near water, or among foliage, and rocks. Although bathing has classical references it was an everyday routine among many Swedes, to take a morning.

Another artist who depicted Swedish life was Carl Wilhelmson. Compared to Zorn, Wilhelmson took his inspiration in more mundane rural life. The penetrating way in which Carl Wilhelmson depicts the character of his figures, has roots in the 1880s Naturalism. At this time it was not uncommon to use photographs, both Wilhelmson and Zorn used the technique for accuracy in their paintings.

⁵¹P.16 Väggmåleri

⁵²P.14 Zorn – paintings, Graphics and Sculpture.

6. LANDSCAPE PAINTING AND NATURE

In the 1890s landscape painting took on a new importance. Symbolic and Synthetic landscape became almost a national style of painting. This paralleled the development in France where images of the countryside had achieved a special place within the cultural pattern of fin de siècle France. By the 1880s Barbizon painting was a fitting vehicle for national aspirations.⁵³ The artists regarded the genre as an expression of the soul. E. Munch describe his view on the representation of nature in landscape painting; "Nature is not something that can be seen by the eye alone – it lies also within the soul, in pictures seen by the inner eye"⁵⁴ Gauguin expressed the symbolic view of the landscape in 1888, and which became the rule for landscape artists in the North, when he said: "Don't copy nature too closely. Art is an abstraction; as you dream amid nature, extrapolate art from it and concentrate on what you will create as a result".⁵⁵

6.1 The Swedish Traditions of Landscape Painting

With the growing metropolises in Europe, the countryside began to be idealised and the longing for nature appeared. Artistically, landscape painting in Sweden, turned to an increased realism during the 1880s. The early 19th c

⁵³P.19 The Barbizon School

⁵⁴P.9 The Mystic North

⁵⁵P.5 Ibid.

was a low point in Swedish landscape art after the late 18th c achievements. The early 19th c stagnation of artistic creativity was an undistinguished period in Swedish art history. The Academy refused to help the situation by rewarding grants, making the situation worse. The result was that landscape painting was dominated by a few artists, of whom none really excelled. During most part of the 19th c Swedish landscape painting was inspired by the sublime and romantic tradition. Elias Martin(1739-1818), who after 12 years in England returned to Sweden, and established the British picturesque tradition (Figure 18). It was with his pupil, Carl Johan Fahlcrantz (1774-1861) landscape painting was showing signs of a new era. He was the first Swedish painter of landscapes to spend his entire life within Nordic borders. As professor at the Swedish Royal Academy of Art (1815 Royal Academy) Fahlcrantz set the direction of Swedish landscape painting for much of the 19th century.⁵⁶ Bergh considered Fahlcrantz the most important artist for the development of Swedish art during the 19th c and argued that he had the same influence on art in Sweden as Corot and Turner, in France and England respectively.⁵⁷ Fahlcrantz represented a Dutch tradition as well as the classical tradition of Claude Lorrain. The influences of Jacob van Ruisdael are evident in *Trollhättans Fall* (Figure 19). There is a vague nationalistic element in the landscape, despite the strong Dutch tone. Nils Jacob Blommér (1816-1853) represents the romantic tradition. His interest in the Nordic myth is displayed in the painting *Älvdansen* (Figure 20). The painting is a manifestation of the

⁵⁶P.355 Svensk Konsthistoria

⁵⁷P.49 Richard Bergh och Nationalmuseum

belief in an animated nature, here represented by the angels. Although the subject matter is taken from Nordic myth it does not show a unique Swedish style. It reveals a central problem in Swedish art during the mid 19thc. The art produced at this time did not exhibit a common national identity. However, the first marked changes had already been embarked upon.⁵⁸ But, it was not until the 1890s that this problem was fully resolved.

6.2 The Symbolic Landscape

There are basically two kinds of expressions in National Romanticism. One is depiction of real life, to promote the Swedish way of life. The other kind is to express the inner feelings of the artist. The latter took the form of landscapes, which created a mood and expressed a belonging, or Swedishness, in a symbolic way. The main influence came from France, but was transformed by the artists to a unique Swedish style of landscape painting. The Swedish Symbolic landscape painting appeared with consistency in the beginning of the 1890s. One of the characteristics of northern symbolist landscapes is the transformation of the picture to a purely visual item and not a representation of a physical space.⁵⁹ The decorative, and often flat, surface enhanced the pictures visual value and distanced them from a physical representation. Mood was an important element in National Romantic painting. But moody landscapes are not necessarily National Romantic. The

⁵⁸P.31 Molnet, Svenskt Landskapsmåleri under 1800-talet

⁵⁹P.13 The Mystic North

Swedish artist produced landscape art based on nature, and real places. Theirs were not based on imaginative fabrications and are therefore National Romantic. However, landscape painting of the 1890s gives the artist's subject view of the landscape. In order to achieve a higher decorative value, but also to evoke a more spiritual reaction in the viewer – details were suppressed. The picture surface will therefore display bolder forms and large patches of colour. M Facos explains the artist's wish to create a decorative surface; "To artists of this time decoration connoted a gravity rarely associated with the term nowadays. Because the opposite of decoration was imitation, there was little talk of bad decoration. When art was decorative, it fulfilled its own intrinsic demands. Decoration referred to compositions characterized by economy of form and distillation of content".⁶⁰ In his art theory Richard Bergh stressed that the importance of decorative quality is equaled to the study of nature. "To achieve unity, artists should carefully study and accentuate those elements in nature that create or reawaken the incidental mood. They must then orchestrate what he referred to as a "trinity" of principles; decorative, ideal or subjective, realistic or objective". Bergh gave Puvis de Chavannes' *Sacred Grove* as an example of where he thought that the artist had deliberately ignored realism in order to achieve his central idea. Bergh recognised that the "trinity of principles" had to be weighed against each other to achieve unity of composition, sometimes one had to be renounced completely.⁶¹

⁶⁰p.137-138 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

⁶¹p.109 Ibid.

The artists educated in France encountered unforeseen problems when trying to depict the Nordic nature. They saw a difference between depicting French and Swedish landscape. Richard Bergh expressed the problem; "the wild and variegated nature of the North is not as accommodating for the artist as the uniform, cultivated nature of France – to interpret the nature of the North, it is not enough for the artist simply to open his eyes. He must also know when to close them. He must be able to dream and to understand the value of listening to his feelings. In France, perhaps it is possible to be a landscape painter only by using one's eyes. In the North a landscape painter must be a poet".⁶²

Because of their geographical situation, the landscape in the North is very different from the landscape in France. The air in the North is clearer which makes the colours much more intense and the contours sharper. The Symbolist artists with a French Naturalist training, faced the problem of seeing the Northern landscape directly and not through the conventions of Naturalist art. Richard Bergh writing in defence of the National Romantic attitude, remarked "in the North art is not a product of happiness, but of longing."⁶³ The artists criticised French art for its superficiality and saw the problem as; "was its tendency towards pure aestheticism, and its satisfaction with purely superficial beauty, elegant and technically accomplished though it may be".⁶⁴

⁶²P.121 Karl Nordström och det moderna stämningenslandskapet.

⁶³P.150 Om Konst och Annat

⁶⁴P.36 The Mystic North

6.3 The Importance of Nature

There is a strong communion between man and nature in the north. The sometimes very harsh climate makes life difficult and emphasizes the interdependence between them. But there is also a philosophical relationship based on a belief that humanity is a part of the world organism, but on equal terms, and that humanity should not be favoured on the expense of nature.⁶⁵ The Swedish writer Ellen Key (1849-1926) who exerted ethical and social influence wrote about the dilemma of over-civilized man; "Both man and his material well being were anchored in the soil. But by his rape of nature, in the continuing struggle to improve his lot, he severed his roots, and thereby lost his identity. To find himself then, man must return to nearness with nature and replant his roots in the earth. We need to conquer the immense resources of Norrland [the most northern part of Sweden] for our material culture, but for our spiritual culture, we need the vast open spaces and the loneliness, where a man can grow strong by confronting himself with his insignificance".⁶⁶ Many artists shared this view of nature and saw it as a natural way of expressing their emotions. There was no conflict in describing their personal emotions in landscapes. The idea expressed by French Symbolism that nature and imagination were direct opposites were therefore inapplicable to Scandinavian painting. Bergh expressed the relationship; "every landscape is a state of mind".⁶⁷

⁶⁵P.84 National Romanticism and the Nordic Imagination

⁶⁶P.7 Tankebilder

⁶⁷P.22 Dreams of a Summer Night

The importance of nature and the strong interdependence felt by the artists were expressed in pure landscapes, as exemplified by the Varberg group, Prince Eugen and Bruno Liljefors. Bruno Liljefors however, showed it in a unique way. He was foremost a painter of animals in landscape. As he was a keen hunter, his paintings are sometimes violent (Plate 11). His approach to nature was to closely study and record it, both fauna and flora. Although the depictions are often close-ups of animals and the viewer is placed on the same level as the animal, the paintings still convey the feeling of the situation being part of a wider context. In many of his paintings there is a sense that the behavior of the animals are transferable to man's emotions and reactions. Liljefors took a holistic view of nature and saw man's place therein and his dependence of it. Thereby his art touched on one of the central ideas evolving in western perception of nature. The new teachings of evolution, like Darwin's epoch making work, were still strongly felt and debated. Nature is a battle where the strongest survives. Liljefors wrote in his notes; "life is imbued with conflict. It is the basis of beauty." Another time he wrote; "when the fox hunts the hare, there is no anxiety in this game between two extremely interested parties, but rather a kind of enhanced sense of life".⁶⁸

⁶⁸p.10 In the realm of the wild

6.4 The Atmospheric Landscape

In the mid 1880s when Naturalism was increasingly being deserted, the emerging National Romanticism and Symbolism introduced a completely different language and imagery to Naturalism. The inspiration partly derived from the special quality of the Northern light and mood.⁶⁹ The patriotic orientation of Nationalism encouraged a search for typical aspects of nature that also corresponded to growing Symbolist interests. Naturalism had been preoccupied with capturing the strong sunlight at mid-day, which was not compatible with the new interest in depicting mood. The use of colour changed from having been used descriptively, to becoming charged with emotional resonance. Especially blue tonalities seemed to hold a strong attraction on artists. It became popular by the late 1880s and was to persist through the 1890s in works by Nordström, Jansson and Fjaestad.⁷⁰

During this period landscape painting aimed at density. Previously the Naturalist artists had concentrated on painting the sensual experiences of the summer months.⁷¹ To achieve density, artists began to look at other times of the day, dawn or dusk when details, and contours were less sharp. The depiction of mood and feeling by use of light, exhibited a tendency to let sensations awaken associations of rest and anticipation. The introduction to *Svensk Konstkrönika under 100 år*, described the feeling; "in the darkness of the winter evening or in the transparent light of the summer night the

⁶⁹p.11 The Swedish Vision – landscape and figurative Painting 1885-1920

⁷⁰p.40 The Mystic North

⁷¹p.48 The Light of the North

discordant Swedish landscape shows itself as a mighty whole. Dusk lets the details fade away revealing the massive structure of the land, the grand natural oneness, pervaded by a lyrical shimmering atmosphere".⁷²

6.4.1 The Wilderness

In the 1890s Northern artists rediscovered the wilderness landscape, in search for an untouched view of the landscape. For some the solitary wilderness disclosed spirituality. Bruno Liljefors and Akselli Gallen-Kallela, the Finish symbolist painter, travelled to remote places in Norway. Inspired by these travels they created paintings of extreme nature.⁷³

The yearning for spiritual experiences took the artists to explore their native wilderness which had been ignored by Naturalism. Wilderness was most identifiably unique to northern countries and it became the embodiment to national character. Some saw the unspoiled wilderness and its remoteness to contained spiritual messages from primitive sources of experience.

Technically, artists had to reformulate their styles and reconstruct pictorial space in order to transform their paintings from representations of nature to symbols of an inner life. For many artists a hurdle to cross was moving from Naturalism, which depicted a sensation that arose out of particular light and atmospheric effects in nature, to a freer stylistic approach

⁷²p.41 The Mystic North

⁷³p.21 Dreams of a Summer Night

that would transform the natural motif to make it convey a mood, feeling or idea that originated from within the soul of the artist.⁷⁴

6.4.2 The Twilight

The twilight may be characteristically Northern. It is also a time favorable for dreaming and contemplation. The Northern landscape, therefore, lends itself to be transformed to a tool for spiritual reflection. Simplified forms and a freer, more lyrical use of deep resonant colour achieved the importance of decorative element in the art of the time. Hence, the twilight was a suitable subject as it had the effect to merge the details into a larger whole. It also gave the paintings the desired spiritualized expression. But the artists didn't truly depart from reality.⁷⁵ In a letter Prince Eugen wrote; "everything becomes simple and grand at dusk. If only one could bring together all the dissimilar impressions and put them down in a single motif, so that the colour would shimmer, have fragrance and be heard".⁷⁶

A basic theme in Nordic landscape painting is depictions of the time of day when people must move carefully, listen and suit her movements to twilight. A poem by Per Lagerkvist (1891- 1974) describes the feeling provoked by the twilight (Figure 21).

⁷⁴p.10 The Mystic North

⁷⁵p.39 In the Realm of the Wild

⁷⁶p.41 The Mystic North

IT IS LOVELIEST AT TWILIGHT

By Per Lagerkvist

It is loveliest at twilight
All the love than heaven can hold
Lies collected in its dusky light
Over the world
Over the house of earth

All is tenderness, all is caressed by hands
The Lord himself erases the distant strands
All is near, all is far away
Everything is given
To man on trust

All is mine, and all shall be taken from me
Very soon shall everything be taken from me
The trees, the clouds, the earth I was
I shall wander
Alone, without trace

6.5 The Varberg Colony

The driving forces behind the colony were Nordström, Kreuger and Bergh. Richard Bergh was seen as the poet, while Nordström was perceived as the darker more introvert artist. They were all involved in opposing the

Academy in the 1880s and were among the most radical artists at the time. The Varberg Colony, which they formed, was to be the most influential force in the development of the National Romantic and Synthetic style of Swedish painting in the 1890s. The flight into the wilderness of the Varberg group was based on the wish to express the national identity and indeed the personal identity through the landscape. Synthetism, like Symbolism, sought to reduce the visible world to its essence and to convey ideas and emotions rather than making representations.⁷⁷ They were all three influenced by Gauguin (1848-1903) and Van Gogh (1853-1890) whose works they saw in Copenhagen in 1893. Carl Larsson said about the art produced by the Varberg colony as: "sitting in Varberg painting each other's landscapes, which are all stolen from Gauguin anyway".⁷⁸ They had been to Copenhagen and seen the exhibition "Den frie udstilling". In 1892 Bergh, Nordström and Krueger visited their Danish friend, Mette Gad-Gauguin, wife of P. Gauguin. Hers, as well as her brother-in-law Edvard Brande's, collections influenced the Swedish artists which is evident in the change of work method and their written references to it. Bergh acquired Gauguin's painting *Landscape from Brittany* (Figure 22).⁷⁹ At a time when Swedish painters were struggling to escape foreign influences, it may seem paradoxical that foreign artists inspired them. But the nature of their borrowing had changed. They focused on Gauguin's and van Gogh's methods rather than subject matter. Richard Bergh declared his frustration with the French training: "I want so much to be Swedish – completely

⁷⁷P.137 Nationalism and the Swedish Imagination

⁷⁸P.128 The Swedish Vision - Landscape and Figurative Painting 1885-1920

⁷⁹P.66 Varbergskolan

Swedish – but I will certainly never be more Swedish than Swedish gloves that is the leather is Swedish, but it is prepared and formed in France⁸⁰

Nordström used exaggeration in his art, distilling the scene and emphasising some elements to achieve a simpler composition, in order to communicate more directly with the viewer. He confined his palette to a narrow range of pale blue and grey tones. The change in his art to a more monochrome tonality and simplified forms, contribute to an impression of two-dimensionality. In *Stormy Clouds* (Plate 13) he depicts the earth and sky with simplified and definite forms, removing all traces of human existence. The use of bleak, somber colours conveys a contemplative mood.⁸¹ Nordström held Gauguin in high admiration but, it was sometimes ambivalent. He was impressed by Gauguin's paintings as useful decorative models on which to base his own synthetist experiments. But at the same time he saw Gauguin's work as limited because it used "ornamental simplicity and clarity for its own sake, for decorative purposes alone." For Nordström this was not enough because; "the real purpose of creating powerful aesthetic harmonies was to make doubly effective, what for him was the principal part of art, namely mood". Nordström found Gauguin's work "cold and empty of mood". This may seem surprising as many perceive Gauguin's art as quite the opposite; "because its simplified forms, bold colours and flowing rhythmic lines, conjure up such strong emotions".⁸² Bergh and Nordström went so far as to formulate a clear difference between their own and Gauguin's decorative

⁸⁰P.42 Varbergskolan

⁸¹P.143 Nationalism and the Swedish Imagination

⁸²P.36 The Mystic North

principle, and of French art in general, and claimed their principle to be somehow superior. It became generally accepted as a North-South artistic division which became a fundamental truth for many northern artists. They could thereby define their essential northerness; "as more profound, more poetic and sometimes more ethically engaged than French values".⁸³

Nordström transformed from an artist who can loosely be described as the most impressionistic of Swedish artists (Figure 10) to a Symbolist painter. In 1892 he settled on Tjörn – the region was primitive and generally inaccessible. When *Varberg Fortress* (Figure 23), of which he painted several series, was shown in Stockholm the reaction has later been described as; "viewers unfamiliar with such harsh terrain interpreted their severe description of the landscape as symbolist peculiarities rather than characteristics of the subjects themselves".⁸⁴ Bergh discussed in his seminal article in 1896, on Nordström, written in close collaboration with Nordström and built on the ideas they developed during the years in Varberg. Bergh wrote that Nordström saw in the art of Gauguin; "a fully conscious, severely ornamental ordering of the masses, which from a decorative point of view was especially significant".⁸⁵

Kreuger was the painter most visibly inspired by van Gogh, in the broken brushstrokes for example. While Kreuger adopted a brighter more saturated palette after his 1893 visit to Copenhagen, where he saw art by van Gogh, he was also inspired by the graphic clarity and decorative tendencies of

⁸³p.36 The Mystic North

⁸⁴p.29 Ibid.

⁸⁵p.31 Ibid.

van Gogh's drawings. Richard Bergh too moved towards Synthetism after having discovered Gauguin and van Gogh at the Copenhagen exhibition 1893. Bergh who rarely painted landscapes produced several during this period, and in the company of Nordström and Kreuger. He wanted to concentrate on; "the poetic drawings I have for so long wanted to produce"⁸⁶. His *Landscape from Halland* (Plate 2) is remarkable for the closeness of its palette to that of Gauguin's painting *Landscape from Brittany* (Figure 22). They display the same range of green and orange tones. Under Gauguin's influence, Bergh limited the autumn colours of Halland flat terrain. The strong trees in *Landscape from Brittany* became windblown trees, whose thin branches form an arch into the open landscape. Their trunks divide the composition vertically into three parts.

Prince Eugen too was influenced by van Gogh and Gauguin. The use of saturated colours in *The Old Castle* (figure 24) reflected an understanding of a principle, van Gogh (Figure 25) explained in a letter to his sister: "By intensifying all the colours one arrives once again at quietude and harmony"⁸⁷. When Georg Pauli (1855-1935), a fellow artist, told Prince Eugen that the reds and blues of the *Old Castle* were too strong, the prince responded that; "strong colours were necessary for decorative effect".⁸⁸

Artistically their art evoked strong feelings by the power of the austere nature. The simple bold lines helped to create monumental shapes. In Varberg a new art was produced. Swedish synthetists, in contrast to those on

⁸⁶p.155 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

⁸⁷p.159 Ibid.

⁸⁸p.159 Ibid.

the continent, usually achieved their evocative effects, not by using non-natural colours, but by exaggerating the colours they found in nature, which remained their inspiration.⁸⁹The Swedish art critic Georg Nordensvan commented on the Varberg painters; "In some of the landscapes Kreuger compete with Nordström to paint not nature as the eye sees it, but the expression of an atmosphere such as one remembers it". He continued the praise with; "this is something completely new and surprising, something with meaning and purpose one does not comprehend at first glance and which should not be judged hastily".⁹⁰Nordensvan was positive and supportive to the art produced by the Varberg-group.

⁸⁹P.143 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

⁹⁰P.113 Varbergskolan

7. CONCLUSION

The essay has explored Swedish art of the 1890s. By illustrations, quotations and analysis, an understanding of the specifics of the art has been conveyed. During the period a definition of Swedishness was sought and formulated. For future generations Swedishness has come to be associated with attributes such as simplicity cleanliness and social equality. The National Romantics believed in the national identity and that its was essential for their program for individual freedom, social harmony and symbiosis with nature.

Further, a stylistic development has been discussed and the influences of certain key foreign sources had been identified. These foreign sources were used by the artists to inspire them to create a unique Swedish style. The essay has stressed the importance of the main source of inspiration, namely the Swedish landscape and in particular its light. For the first time in Swedish history, artists pursued an art grounded in their own perception of Sweden.

Finally, one view of Swedishness according to Ehrensvärd; "We have authentic truth in our feelings, but authentic cold in our blood". Because of Sweden's climate, he reasoned, Sweden produced art with "a simplicity greater than that ever produced, even in Egyptian Times. We achieve this by means of our true national understanding and our national disposition, which makes us the least complicated of all nations".⁹¹ Bergh and his colleagues strove to recover the primitive simplicity that Ehrensvärd identified as the Swedish artistic heritage.

Special emphasis on landscape art was essential given its importance and the importance of nature as part of their national character. The essay has brought across the success of Swedish art at this time. The Swedes together with other Nordic artists represented a renewal of art. This renewal consisted of the freshness of the new motifs they found in their own landscape.

CATALOGUE

RICHARD BERGH (1858 – 1919)

Richard Bergh was the son of the landscape painter Edvard Bergh. He was a pupil at Perseus art school and a student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm. In the early 1880s he went to Paris where he received a medal at his debut at the Paris Salon of 1883. During this time he was a strong supporter of the Naturalistic art and a member of the Opponent Group. Upon his return to Sweden, he developed an art theory for the Nationalistic Romantic painting based on Synthetism and Symbolism. It was this program he tried to implement together with Kreuger and Nordström in Varberg 1893 – 1895. He played an important role as critic, author and organizer of the Swedish art world and the artistic program he developed promoted the social integration of art.⁹²

Bergh saw a strong relationship between a country's nature and the artist or indeed every inhabitant. The relationship could be evoked by the art unique for that particular country, which would strengthen the deep feeling of belonging. He described his generation's efforts and its; "desire to make art more profound through contact with the landscape and people to which they themselves belong, just as infinitely and organically as branches and twigs on

a tree belong to the tree".⁹³He felt strongly that art must communicate with the viewer; "A painting should immediately awaken a mood of sensitivity that builds a bridge between the work of art and us. It should enable us to wander directly into the world of feelings that the artist inhabited when he wielded his brush".⁹⁴

PLATE 1

Tystnad/ *Silence* 1893

Oil on Canvas 97 x 107cm

Signed lower Right

Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, Stockholm

There are detectable links with Böcklin's *Island of the Dead* (Figure 15). Both paintings evoke feelings of stillness and silence. In *Silence* the dominance of horizontals – the wall, the green patches in the foreground, and the verticals in the form of poplar as well as the structure beyond, contribute to the sense of stillness. It communicates directly with the viewer. In order to convey this feeling he has used the language of Symbolism. That is to represent personal feelings through natural imagery. Bergh followed the

⁹²Svensk Uppslagsbok

⁹³P.46 The Light of the North

Symbolic doctrine that; "an artwork's colour and line becomes true, if together they correspond to the feeling evoked by nature".⁹⁵

PLATE 2

Landskap från Halland/ *Landscape from Halland* 1895

Oil on Canvas 67.5 x 92cm

Signed lower Right

Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Göteborg

Nowadays, Bergh is foremost known as a portraitist. But during the years with the Varberg colony, which he co-founded together with Kreuger and Nordström, he painted several landscapes. It was during this time he painted *Landscape from Halland*. Bergh has tried to reduce the objects to simple shapes and limit form and colour. However, compared to Gauguin, Bergh has not taken this to the same extreme, the broken brushstrokes creates a flickering sense. However, it holds a decorative quality, which was much appreciated at the time.

⁹⁴P.109 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

⁹⁵P.32 Thielska Galleriet

GUSTAF FJAESTAD (1868-1848)

During the time of the Art Nouveau, the division between art and craft was very loose. Fjaestad was an artist as much as a craftsman. He produced tapestries and even wooden furniture showing the width of his talent. His first public success came in 1898 at the League's Exhibition in Stockholm and he was acclaimed thereafter as one of Sweden's leading artists. His particular style evolved in the early 1890s in the context of the National Romantic program. His teachers included Bruno Liljefors and Carl Larsson. Carl Larsson was heavily inspired by art nouveau and its energetic and flowing lines, which was taken up by Fjaestad. He very little deviated from the artistic platform he established around this time.⁹⁶

From Liljefors he learnt to observe nature and in it find his subject-matters. Similar to Japanese art there is a broad decorative unity in his nature studies with its swelling rhythmic forms. He used a very limited, almost monochromatic colour scheme and a pointillist technique used in a purely decorative way. His most frequent subject-matter were winter scenes of snow-laden trees in moonlight or late afternoon sun.⁹⁷

⁹⁶P.141 Svenska Konstnärer

⁹⁷P.78 The Mystic North

PLATE 3

Vinterlandskap i Månsken/ *Winter Moonlight* 1895

Oil on Canvas 150 x 200cm

Signed lower right

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

Fjaestad, following the National Romantic rule to paint subjects about which one feels most passionate, concentrated on wintry scenes. He used Synthetist methods of strengthened contours and simplified forms, to achieve a decorative and emotional effect.⁹⁸ The art nouveau influences are revealed in the flowing lines of the snow and the juxtaposition of intricate and simple patterns.

EUGENE JANSSON (1862 – 1915)

Although, he was a student of the Academy and the E. Perseus art school, he is to a large extent self-taught. In mid 1880s Jansson sought contact with the Swedes returning from Paris and became a member of the newly founded Artists Association.⁹⁹ He had not studied abroad and did not

⁹⁸P.187 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination.

⁹⁹P.262 Svenskt Konstnärslexicon

travel outside Sweden until 1900. He was above all a painter of the twilight with a predominantly blue palette. He painted mainly townscapes, as oppose to other painters of his generation who sought inspiration in the wilderness and untouched nature. Like Fjaestad, he depends very much on art nouveau rhythms which emerge in his broad designs.

The intense blue, he used to depict the night air derived from the fact that he painted the darkness from inside a lighted room.¹⁰⁰The night-time townscapes were abandoned by Jansson in 1905 when he took up a new theme of male nude figures in bright landscapes.¹⁰¹

PLATE 4

Riddarfjärden i Stockholm/ *Riddarfjärden in Stockholm* 1898

Oil on Canvas 150 x 135cm

Signed lower right

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

Throughout his career Jansson was preoccupied with the shifting moods of atmosphere and light of his native city Stockholm. The blue twilight and the half-light of dawns, articulated by the lamplight and their reflections

¹⁰⁰P.86 Eugene Janssons Måleri

¹⁰¹P.392Art at the Crossroads

in the water. Many of his townscapes, as indeed Plate 4, represent views from his apartment in Stockholm. Here the view is from a high viewpoint over the dark forms of the hills. The background of coastline and skyline are rendered summarily but accurately. Jansson painted Stockholm with a personal feeling and intensity. The characteristic use of ultramarine blue and flowing lines which emphasise the perspective was unique in Swedish art.¹⁰² His paintings are highly evocative and reflect his innermost feelings. He was lonely and suffered from melancholia and an increasing deafness which caused him to lead an isolated.¹⁰³

PLATE 5

Nocturne/ *Nocturne* 1901

Oil on Canvas 149 x 201cm

Signed lower right

Thielska Galleriet, Stockholm

The directional and broken brushstrokes creates the sense of energy seems to allude to works by van Gogh and the Varberg painters. He has

¹⁰²P.112 The Swedish Vision – Landscape and Figurative Painting 1885-1920

¹⁰³P.55 Thielska Galleriet

created a view that conveys a mood of mystery. The musical title of his painting is inspired by Whistler as indeed the limitation to one colour.

ERNST JOSEPHSON (1851 - 1906)

He studied at the Academy of fine arts and received grants to travel to Holland, Belgium, Germany, Italy and France. He also travelled to Spain and North Africa. He was a fellow student of Bastien-Lepage in Paris in the 1870s.¹⁰⁴ In 1888 he developed a mental illness. Ernst Josephson took a central position among young artists and was a driving force behind the opposition against the Academy. He is thought by many to be the greatest Swedish painter in modern times. The main source of inspiration was the old Renaissance master, Titian and the Dutch artist Rembrandt, who he copied and studied closely and from whom he derived the intense colour which earned him a unique place in modern times.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴p.249 Svenska Konstnärer

PLATE 6

Strömkarlen/ *The Water Sprite* 1884

Oil on Canvas 215 X 150cm

Signed upper right

Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, Stockholm

The Water Sprite was the first late 19th c Swedish painting to praise the power of the imagination. It anticipated key elements of both National Romanticism and Symbolism. Josephson painted it in 1884 during which time Swedish artists followed the Naturalist dictum of objectivity. The painting had been inspired by a vision, connecting Josephson with the French Symbolists. There is a traceable impact on subsequent works such as; Carl Larsson's *Daughter of Eve* (Figure 26) and Prince Eugen's *The Old Castle* (Figure 24). In *The Water Sprite*, Josephson tried to merge the Naturalistic method to copy nature, with the aim of producing a decorative piece of art. The decorative approach was later to become characteristic for Synthetism. It is a unique piece of work and anticipates the style to come.¹⁰⁶ *The Water Sprite*, when first shown, shocked and caused controversy and continued to do so. When exhibited at the Stockholm Exhibition of 1897, at the height of nationalistic

¹⁰⁵ P.x Swedish Artist 1880-1900

¹⁰⁶ P.15 E. Josephson - En Studie

feeling, it again attracted strong criticism. The National Museum even rejected to include it in their collection when presented with it as a gift.¹⁰⁷

NILS KREUGER (1858 – 1930)

At the Academy in Stockholm he was the fellow student of Richard Bergh and Karl Nordström. In 1881 he travelled to Paris to join the Swedish colony. Unlike many of his Swedish colleagues he mixed with French and Spanish artists and was soon fluent in French. When the Opponents organized themselves, Kreuger was a founder member. He was an illustrator to August Strindberg and *Ord och Bild*, the leading cultural magazine at the time.¹⁰⁸ Kreuger's often used subject-matter was of people working the land or of heavily worked and underfed farm animals. He expressed his nationalism through his choice of subject-matter.

PLATE 7

Två Kor vid Stranden/ *Two Cows on the Beach* 1894

Oil on Canvas, with ink 23 x 31cm

¹⁰⁷P.152Den Utställda Världen

¹⁰⁸P.138Varbergskolan

Signed lower left

Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Göteborg

The dash and dot technique in ink over oil makes the picture seem clearer and more balanced in its colour tones. Another aspect of his style was the inclusion of the sinuous lines of Art Nouveau. The decorative aspect of the painting was very important to him. In this respect his painting, like that of Eugene Jansson, was influenced by Gauguin, but also Munch.

PLATE 8

Varberg Slott/ *Varberg Castle*, 1895

Oil on Canvas 79 X 50cm

Signed lower left

Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Göteborg

A year after he painted this canvas he was back in Stockholm where he renewed his friendship with Eugene Jansson. He depicted Varberg castle at dusk in the typical blue colour of Jansson and that many of the National Romantics used when painting the twilight. He has contrasted it to the yellow light to create the lyrical mood.

CARL LARSSON (1853-1919)

He spent some years in Grez with the Swedish colony during the 1880s. During the late 1890s he created his famous home, Sundborn in the county of Dalarna. During this time he painted series of watercolours depicting his home and family. They are all pictures with strong sunshine, children playing in the water and plein-air meals. But foremost they are interior scenes of his parents, wife and children. His art has a very linear quality to it and very decorative. One can trace an influence from Japanese woodcut as well as Art Nouveau. He is one of the best-known Swedish artists internationally and his art is represented in museums in among other countries Italy and USA.¹⁰⁹

PLATE 9

Kräftfiske/ *Crayfishing* ca. 1894

Watercolour 32 x 43cm

Signed lower right

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

¹⁰⁹ P.289 Svenska Konstnärer

One of the most loved Swedish celebrations is depicted in this watercolour. It is one of the most awaited events in the Swedish calendar. When the crayfishing season opens traditionally on the night of around the 8th of August people gather to the lakes to prepare for the annual feast. A Nordic viewer would immediately recognise the scene in Larsson's painting. The "Crayfish Premier" began as an exclusive middle class custom and became a national tradition in the 20th c, partly because middle class intellectuals saw it as an expression of Swedishness, and partly because the general wealth increased. Larsson wrote a poem to accompany this painting¹¹⁰;

To live in Sweden,
In meadow and valley,
In forests, on lakes,
In the green leaves' hall
See, that is to *live*!!
See, that is a life,
To share with friends,
With children and wife!

PLATE 10

Blomsterfönstret/ *The Flower Window*, 1894

Watercolour 32 x 43cm

Signed lower middle

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

The painting depicts an interior from Carl Larsson's home in Sundborn. It was part of the sequence *Ett hem* (A home), produced in 1890s¹¹¹. It enjoyed enormous success, nationally as well as internationally. It reflects a happy and harmonious home and had great influence on home decoration, which was Larsson's intention. He wanted to promote old handicraft traditions. Carl Larsson was part of the revival of folk art. During the 1890s, folk cultural heritage did not pose an obstacle to radical cultural creativity. Instead, the cultural heritage was part of the cultural creativity.¹¹² Indeed, arts of the folk nearby, or of native people, as in the art of Gauguin, was used in the revolt against the academic tradition.

¹¹⁰P.57 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

¹¹¹P.128 Carl and Karin Larsson

¹¹²P.11 Swedish Folk Art

BRUNO LILJEFORS (1860 – 1939)

He studied at the Academy of fine arts in Stockholm. Thereafter he travelled to Düsseldorf, Munich, Rome and Paris. While in Paris he adopted plein-air painting. The art reveals the close relationship between the animal and the surrounding environment.¹¹³ Bruno Liljefors used light and nature to create mood and atmosphere. He said about his paintings; "A picture should impress by its idea, and by the lifelike manner in which it is executed, not pedantically because nature is not pedantic".¹¹⁴ He was widely admired by his fellow artists, Zorn said about him; "Of all the artists in the world, none has filled me with more respect than Liljefors. If anyone influenced me it is he".¹¹⁵

PLATE 11

Katt och Fågelbo/ *Cat and Bird's Nest*, 1890

Oil on Canvas 56 x 43cm

Signed lower right

Zorn Samlingar, Mora

¹¹³p.296 Svenska Konstnärer

¹¹⁴p.6 In the Realm of the Wild

¹¹⁵p.12 Anders Zorn

He was not only interested in the animals as biological beings but also in the psychological characteristics of the species and the individuals. In the 1880s he was particularly fond of depicting his favourite animal, the cat, in different situations. He admired the cat as a harmonious creation that despite living close to man had never given up its independence. In this painting the peaceful domestic cat reveals itself as a predator, guided by instincts. The nest and the eggs are left to their fate. During the 1890s, Liljefors' art develops to contain the emotional mood of the time, inspired by the poetry of Heidenstam.¹¹⁶The cold and slightly blue tone of the light is accentuated by the garden bush's green-blue leaves that spread out over the white surface of the picture.

PLATE 12

Morgon/ *Morning* 1894

Oil on Canvas 80 x 95cm

Signed lower right

Thielska Galleriet, Stockholm

¹¹⁶p.12 In the Realm of the Wild

The composition is such that its elements are frontally oriented and have been organized in more or less horizontal fields, parallel to the picture plane. Liljefors participated in the renewal of landscape painting that took place during these years. The new orientation was most evident in the work of the Varberg group of which he was not a member. In *Morning* the colour of the sky is reflected on the surface of the water. The slow movement of the water, caused by the morning breeze is represented by bands of colour thereby enhancing the impact of the colour. The horizontal bands of colour and their individuality and being separated from each other, turns the painting in to a spectrum. It is as if Liljefors wanted to emphasis the impact of colour in the new landscape art.¹¹⁷

KARL NORDSTRÖM (1855-1923)

He studied in France and Belgium. He returned to Sweden 1886. Nordström was together with Richard Bergh and Nils Kreuger part of the Varberg Colony. He was director of the Artists Association 1896. While in France he was strongly influenced by Impressionism, but over the years his palette became less French. He developed a palette of, which is now seen as, very Nordic colours, harsh and restricted. He painted mainly atmospheric landscapes with often remarkable monumentality.¹¹⁸ Nordström left Stockholm

¹¹⁷p.39 In the Realm of the Wild

¹¹⁸p.372 Svenska Konstnärer

for his native province on the West Coast of Sweden, to find the wilderness paradise.¹¹⁹ He wrote to Bergh; "Here is silence – an absolute silence, not a single sound, a paradise for nerves grown lax. No sunshine – a soul-refreshing violet tone over the cliffs and the broad green stretches of field soft as velvet." One year later he wrote; "It seems that it will be the wilderness that will preserve our health and our strength".¹²⁰ It is while in Varberg he embarks on the most successful and prolific period.

PLATE 13

Ovädersmoln/ *Stormy Clouds*, 1893

Oil on Canvas 72 x 80cm

Signed

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

In the winter and spring of 1892-93, Nordström changed attitude to form and colour. He took a more daring line, encouraged by what he had found in the art of Gauguin. In *Stormy Clouds* he attained the resonance he had been seeking. He lucidly defines the emphatic, simplified forms of earth and sky, eliminating all traces of human presence. The gloomy colours differs

¹¹⁹p.16 The Mystic North

¹²⁰p.144The Swedish Vision – Landscape and Figurative painting 1885-1920

from Gauguin's Breton Paintings, and conveys a more contemplative mode. M
Facos describes Nordström's development along Synthetism as producing;
"streamlined images with [] clearly delineated forms and intensified colours
[which] convey a strong and immediate impression of feelings and ideas".¹²¹

PLATE 14

Varberg Fäste/ *Varberg Fortress* 1894

Oil on Canvas 72 x 117cm

Signed lower left

Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Göteborg

As so many artists at this time, Nordström was influenced by, and actively studying Japanese art, especially Hokusai and Hiroshige's view of Mount Fuji. He returned to the same subject, a rocky pinnacle on the island of Tjörn, treating it as his personal Mount Fuji. He thereby developed a definite style which is displayed in *Stormy Clouds*, (Plate 13). As in *Stormy Clouds*, he has in *Varberg Fortress* concentrated on the larger structural aspects of the landscape. The relatively undefined foreground leads the eye straight to the strong structure of the fortress in the background. The colours are deep and

¹²¹P.143 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

vibrant, applied with loose brushstrokes emphasizing the almost abstract forms of the fortress.¹²²

PRINCE EUGEN (1865-1947)

He was the youngest son of the King of Sweden, Oscar II. In 1886 he had decided to become a painter and went to Paris in 1887. This was the time when Symbolic art took over as cutting edge art in Paris. He was foremost a landscape painter and it was within that genre he achieved prominence. It came to the fore in early 1890s. Allying with the National Romantic artists, he wanted to induce the landscape with symbolic and expressive meaning, without distorting it with unnecessary decorative peculiarities. Prince Eugen, together with Nordström are seen by many, as the most prominent exponents of National Romantic landscape art of the 1890s.¹²³ After 1900 however, Prince Eugen's art changes to a kind of "lyrical and impressionistic Naturalism".¹²⁴

PLATE 15

Där Skogen Glesnar/ *Forest Clearing* 1892

¹²²p.31 The Mystic North

¹²³p.63 Ibid.

Oil on Canvas 76 x 45.5cm

Signed

Prince Eugens Waldemarsudde, Stockholm

Prince Eugen acknowledged that this painting was inspired by a book by Heidenstam, thereby emphasising the important link between literature and art. The painting is of a forest, outside Stockholm. It is one of the first depictions of winter melancholy expressed in painting. This particular mood was often expressed in poetry of the time. When Heidenstam saw the painting he was taken aback at how well, it conveyed the mood in his book.¹²⁵

PLATE 16

Molnet/ *The Cloud* 1896

Oil on Canvas 112 x 103cm

Signed lower right

Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, Stockholm

The Cloud is by some seen as the most important paintings from this period. This is the second version of the same subject. The first was executed

¹²⁴p.74 The Mystic North.

¹²⁵p.9 Prins Eugen

in 1894. The difference between the two is, the latter is more synthetic to its character. *The Cloud* depicts a landscape, south of Stockholm and often visited by Prince Eugen. Although topographically accurate the scene has undergone strong simplifications, resulting in a sense of monumentality. The motif has thereby been turned into a symbol of a landscape of central Sweden.¹²⁶ The theme or mood in the painting is; longing which is being enforced by the path disappearing into the unknown distance. The mood which has been created has strong connotations to landscapes by Arnold Böcklin.

AUGUST STRINDBERG (1849-1912)

Strindberg was foremost seen as a writer by his contemporaries and his paintings were regarded as eccentric expressions of his talent. Strindberg considered the process of creation and the physical application of paint to be of primary importance, the subject-matter was secondary.¹²⁷ He is most widely known as a writer and a cultural commentator. But he was also an artist and art critic. Most of his paintings were produced around the turn of the century and they show a remarkable expressionistic force. This creative period coincides with the period he described; "as suffering from a crises which [he] likened puberty".¹²⁸ He moved to Paris in 1894 where he suffered

¹²⁶p.96 Dreams of a Summer Night

¹²⁷p.35 Ibid.

¹²⁸p.12 The Swedish Vision – Landscape and Figurative Painting, 1885-1920

psychologically. His personal dairy revealed empty scientific ambitions and occult dreams.¹²⁹

PLATE 17

Snöstorm på Havet/ *Snowstorm at Sea*, 1894

Oil on cardboard, 66 x 47cm

Not Signed

Nordiska Museet, Stockholm

Snowstorms and storms are recurrent themes in Strindberg's painting. The palette is suppressed and there are obvious cracks originating from the drying process. He used a palette knife to remove paint and bring out the brown priming of the canvas, making it part of the finished painting. It is the handling of the paint and way of creating that was most important. The painting dates from about the time when Strindberg met Gauguin.¹³⁰

¹²⁹p.357 Litteraturens Historia i Sverige

¹³⁰p.268 Dreams of a Summer Night

CARL WILHELM WILHELMSON (1866-1928)

Wilhelmson concentrated on depicting the local fisherfolk of the West Coast of Sweden, following the line of depicting Swedish way of life in National Romantic painting. He belonged to the first generation National Romantic artists, but he did not start to paint until the late 1880s. At the art school Valand, his teacher was Carl Larsson. The school was supported by Pontus Fürstenberg, himself a strong supporter of National Romantic art. Wilhelmson lived in Paris a decade after the artists of his generation. But every summer he returned to his native region on the West Coast of Sweden.¹³¹

PLATE 18

Fiskarkvinnor på Hemväg från Kyrkan/ *Fishermen's Wives Returning from Church*, 1899

Oil on Canvas, 137 x 104cm

Signed lower right

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

¹³¹p.189 Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination

It is mainly the subject matter that places him among the National Romantic artist. The bright colours of his palette anticipate the colours to come. The reserved brushstrokes and sharp colour contrasts are reminiscent of Nordström's art. But contrary to Nordström he sees the motif detail for detail, without the bold unifying strokes. It is the bright light that gives the painting its resonance. The structural balance of the painting is achieved by use of geometrical facets.¹³²

ANDERS ZORN (1860-1920)

He was a painter, printmaker and sculptor. He came from a humble background, the illegitimate son of a Swedish woman and German immigrant. His most famous depictions are of bathing women in the archipelago and of typically Swedish way life. He was a famous portrait painter and performed several portraits of wives of wealthy Americans as well as depicting the Swedish royal family. He is considered one of the most successful Swedish artists, and the most cosmopolitan. His technique is of virtuosity, with strong colours. Zorn never distanced himself completely from the foundations of Naturalism. He continued to develop its technique until he achieved this virtuosity, which brought him world fame.¹³³

¹³²p.690Svenskt Konstnärslexikon

¹³³p.115Thielska Galleriet

PLATE 19

Sommar/ *Frileuse*, 1894

Oil on Canvas 98 x 66cm

Signed lower right

Prins Eugens Waldermarsudde, Stockholm

In front of a portrait painted by Rubens, a friend asked him; “You are most familiar with Rembrandt, Velazquez or Rubens? The answer came; Yes, but in reverse order – and Holbein to, but not the little Dutch painters”.¹³⁴ Maybe this explains something of how he saw himself and his appreciation of the female flesh that made him paint so many bathing women. However, it may seem as an artificial pose, but during the summer months it is a Swedish custom to take an early morning swim in the nude. In that sense Zorn was depicting an expression of swedishness, set in the Swedish landscape.

¹³⁴P.88 Anders Zorn

PLATE 20

Midsommardans/ *Midsummer Dance*, 1897

Oil on Canvas, 140 x 98 cm.

Signed lower right

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

Zorn frequently participated at the international exhibitions with great success. The pressures and competition brought him to a prominent position within plein-air painting. This was the area he excelled in and the nationalistic programme he adopted was basically just a magnificent display of Swedish traditions. Zorn concentrated on the most Swedish of regions, Dalarna when depicting the Swedish summer night in a nationalistic mood. Zorn's *Midsummer Dance* 1897, was the first in a series of paintings praising the Swedish culture, executed with artistic brilliance.¹³⁵ As oppose to many of his contemporaries with socialist sympathies, Zorn was seen as a supporter of the capitalists whom he served as a portrait painter. However, he never limited himself solely to this genre.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ P.68 Zorn – Paintings, Graphics and Sculpture

¹³⁶ P.71 Ibid.

Plates

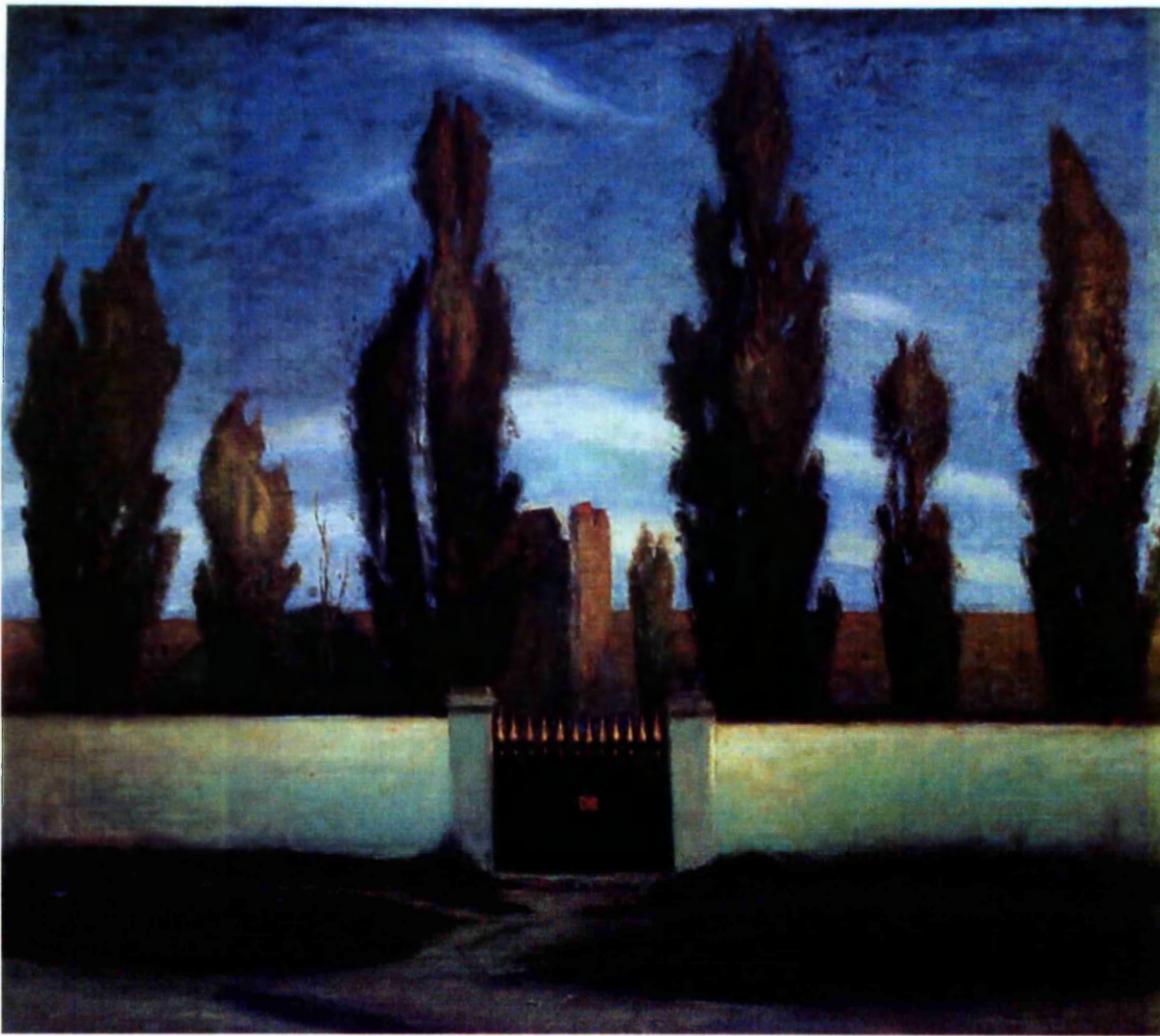


PLATE 1. Richard Bergh, *Silence*, 1893



PLATE 2. Richard Bergh, *Landscape from Halland*, 1895



PLATE 3. Gustaf Fjaestad, *Winter Moonlight*, 1895



PLATE 4. Eugene Jansson, *Riddarfjärden in Stockholm*, 1898

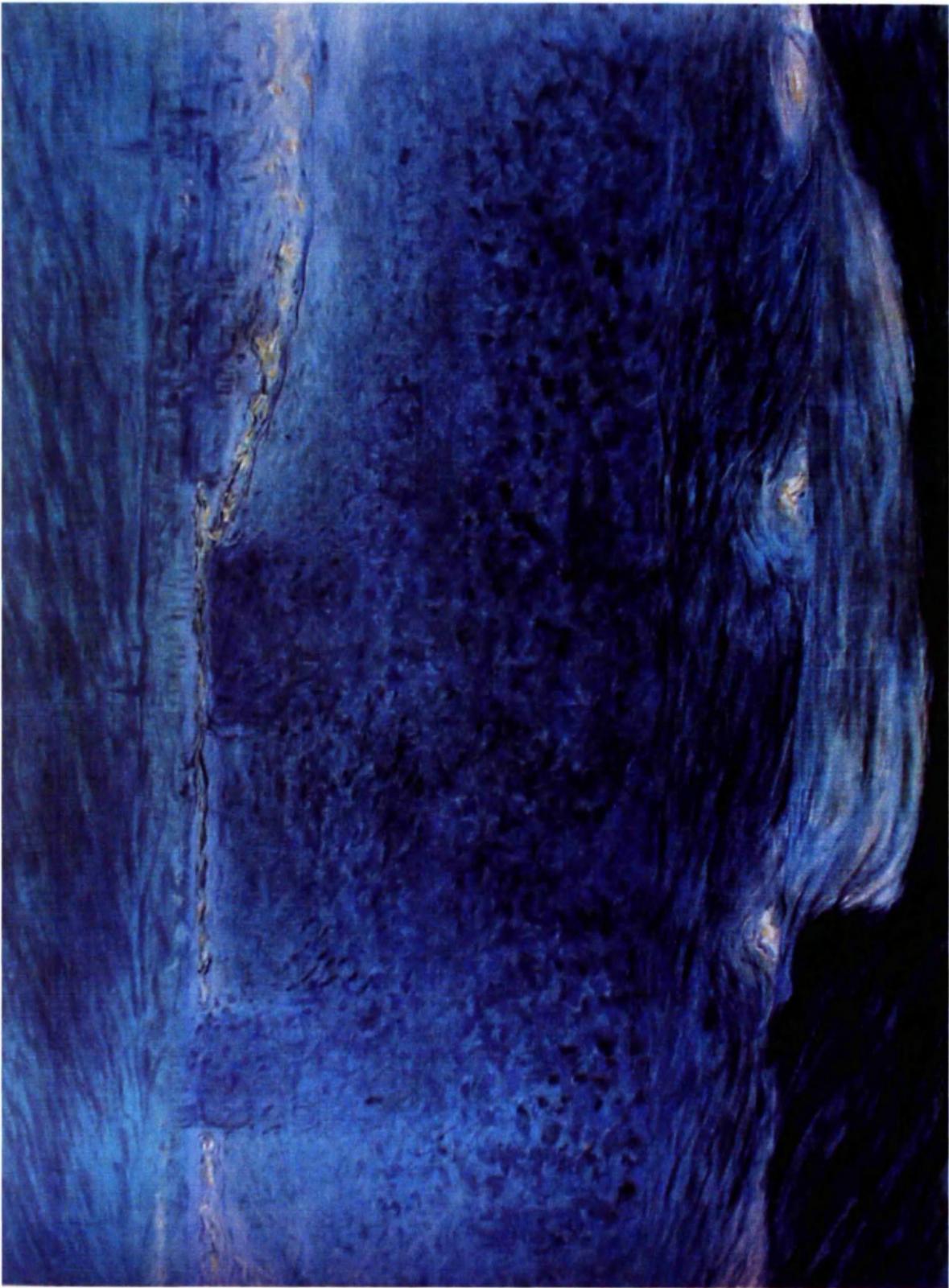


PLATE 5. Eugene Jansson, *Nocturne*, 1901

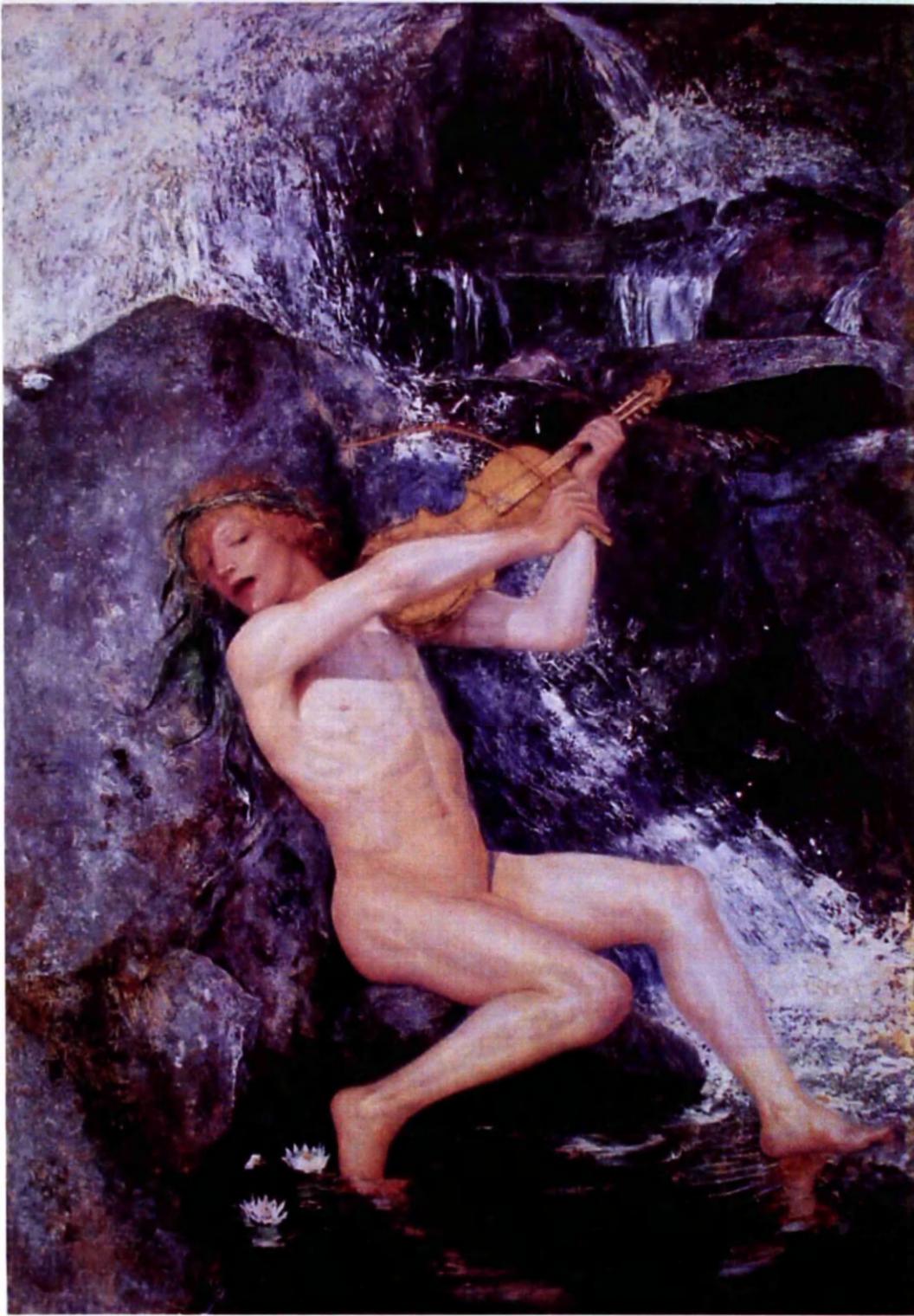


PLATE 6. Ernst Josephson, *The Water Sprite*, 1884



PLATE 7. Nils Kreuger, *Two Cows on the Beach*, 1894



PLATE 8. Nils Kreuger, *Varberg Castle*, 1895

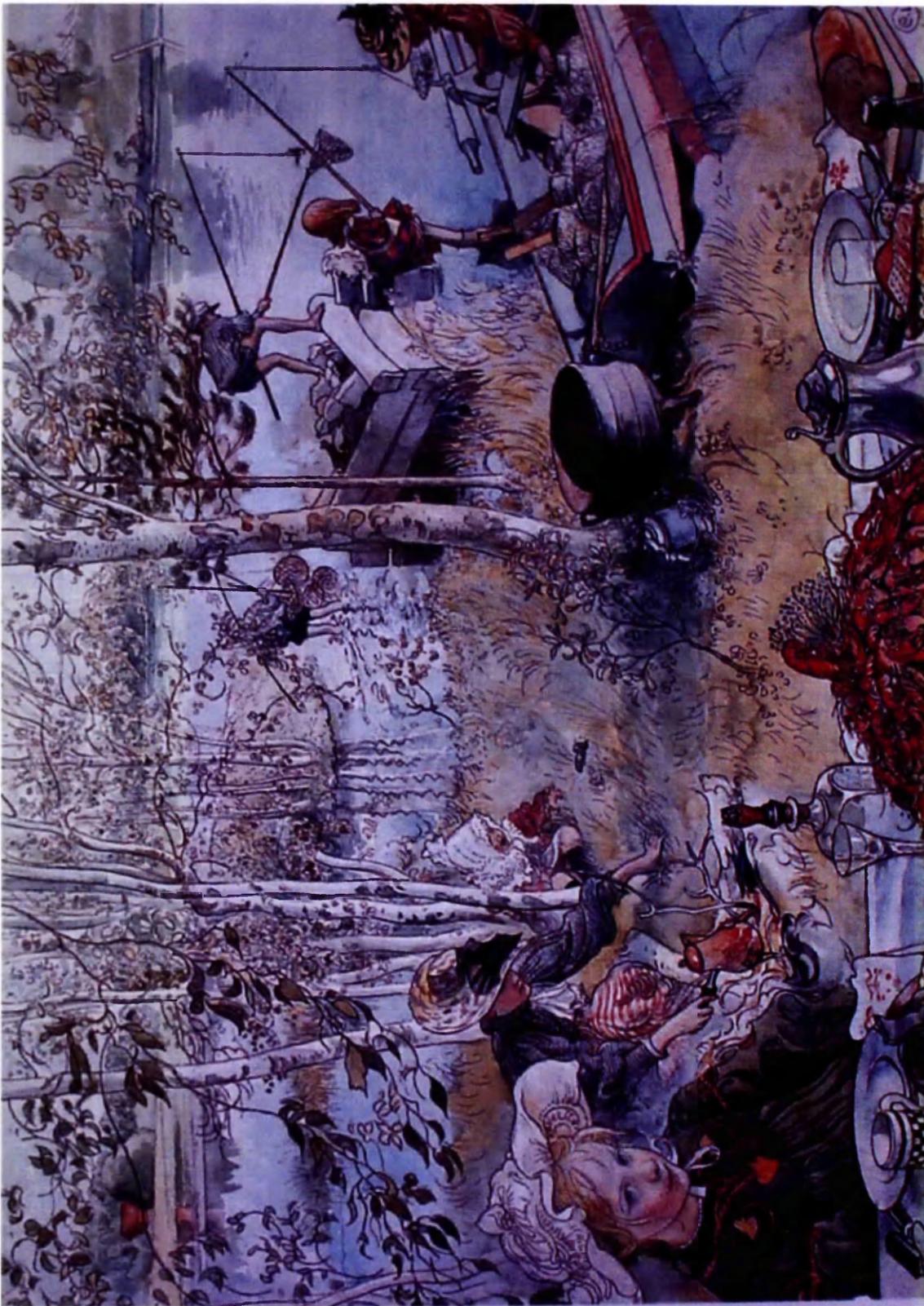


PLATE 9. Carl Larsson, *Crayfishing*, Ca 1894

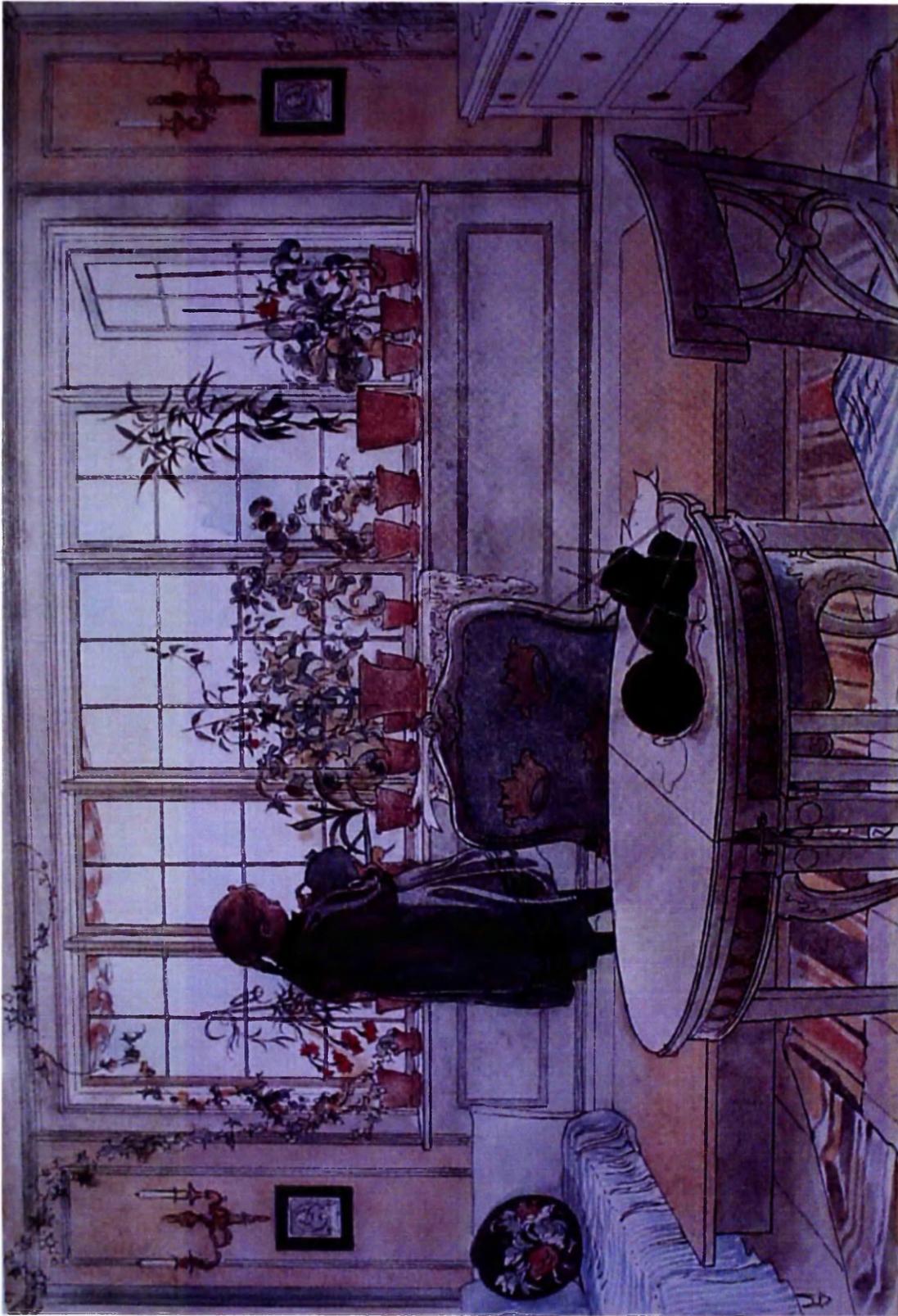


PLATE 10. Carl Larsson, *The Flower Window*, 1894



PLATE 11. Bruno Liljefors, *Cat and Bird's Nest*, 1890



PLATE 12. Bruno Liljefors, *Morning*, 1894



PLATE 13. Karl Nordström, *Stormy Clouds*, 1893



PLATE 14. Karl Nordström, *Varberg Fortress*, 1894



PLATE 15. Prince Eugen, *Forest Clearing*, 1892

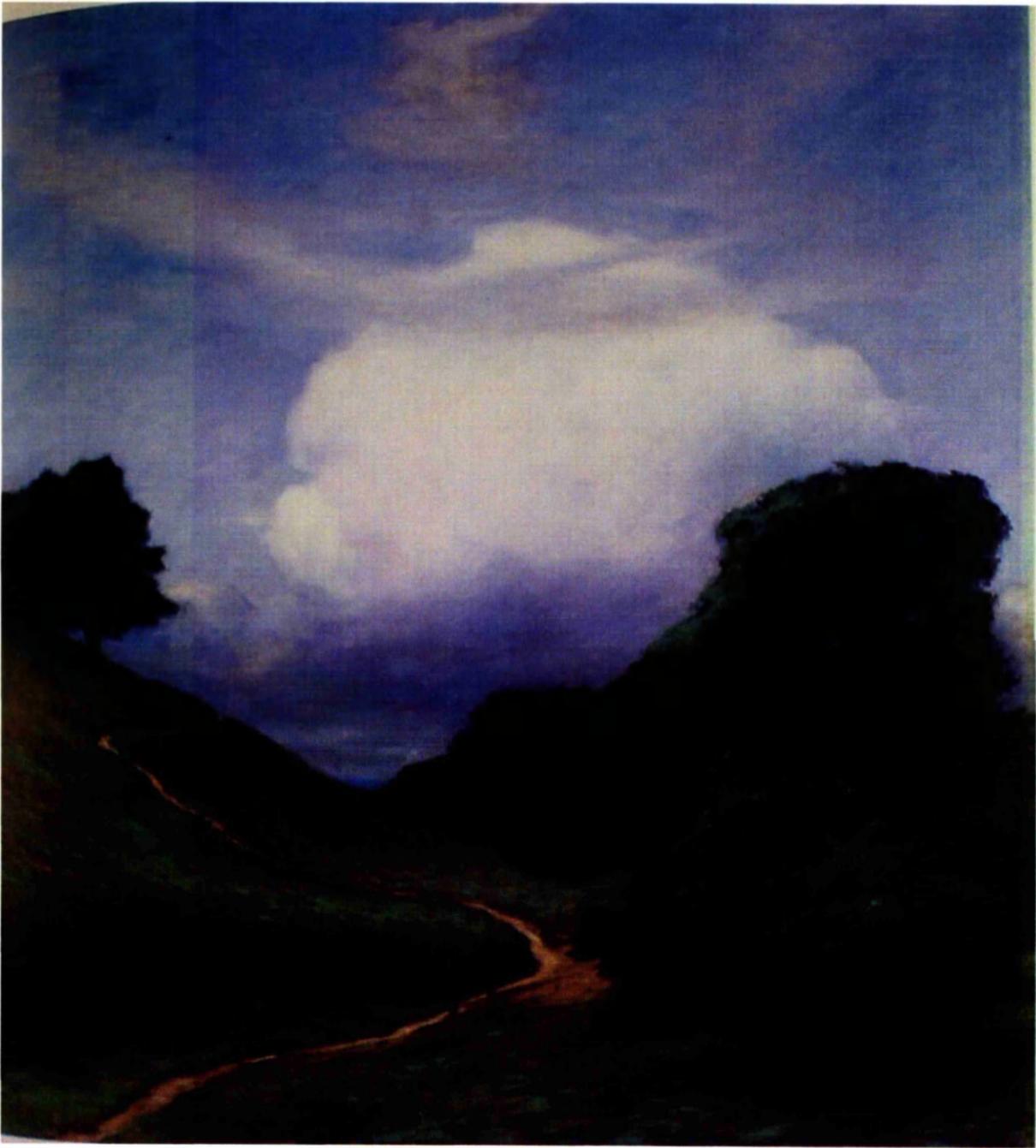


PLATE 16. Prince Eugen, *The Cloud*, 1896



PLATE 17. August Strindberg, *Snowstorm at Sea*, 1894



PLATE 18. Carl Wilhelmson, *Fishermen's Wives Returning from Church*, 1899



PLATE 19. Anders Zorn, *Frileuse*, 1894



PLATE 20. Anders Zorn, *Midsummer Dance*, 1897

Comparative

Illustrations

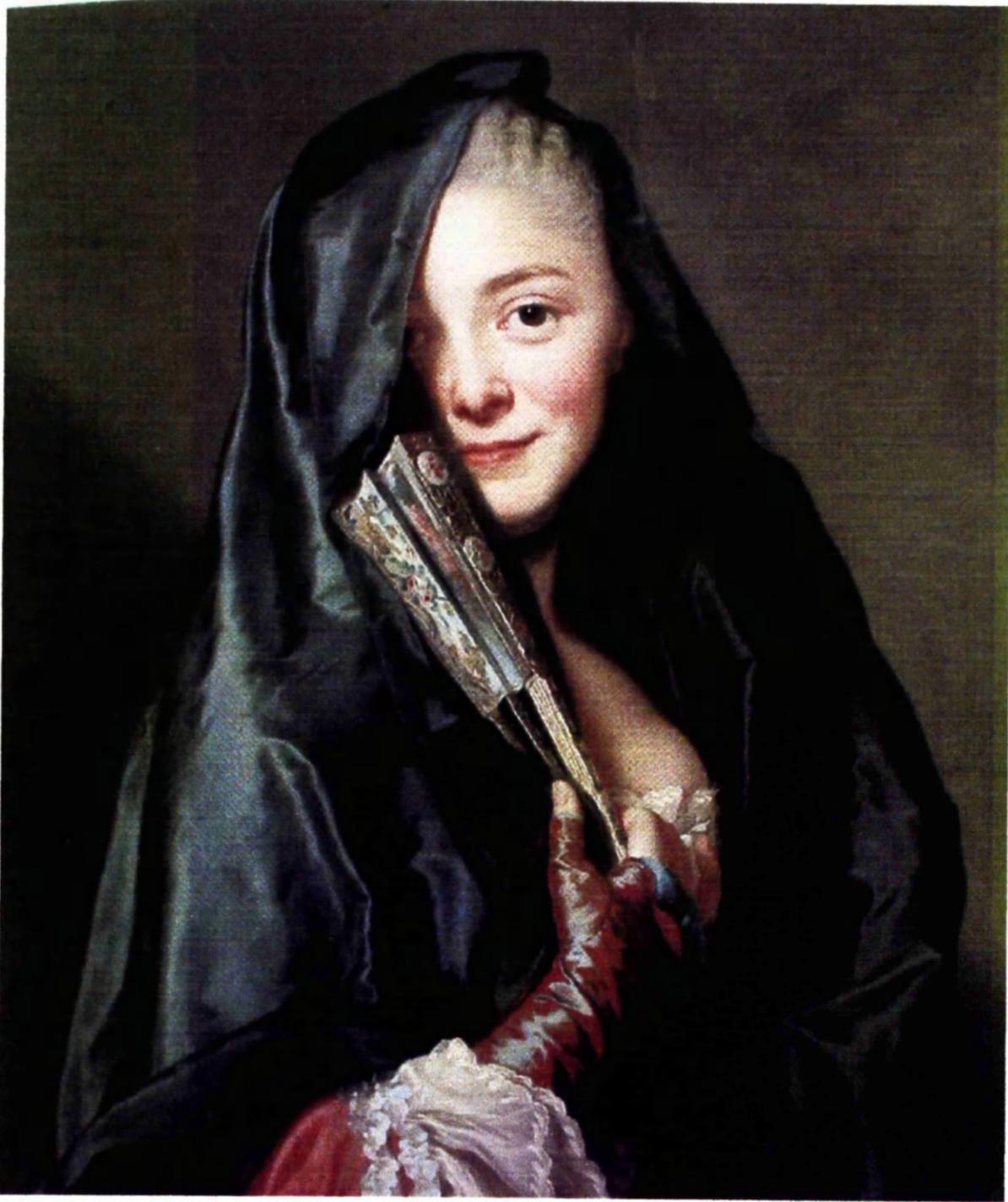


FIGURE 1. Alexander Roslin, *The Lady with a veil*, 1769

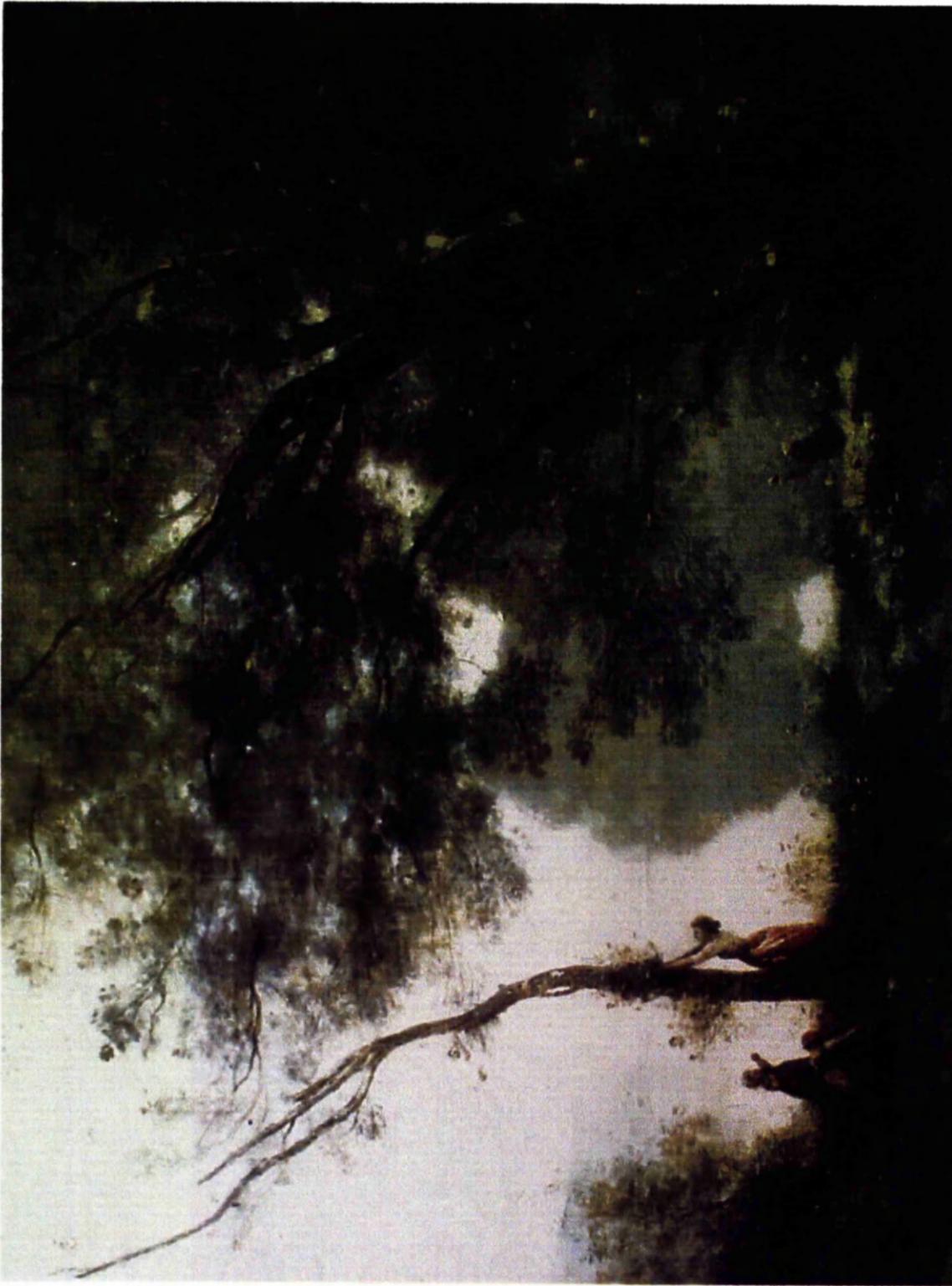


FIGURE 2. Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *Souvenir of Mortefontaine*, 1854

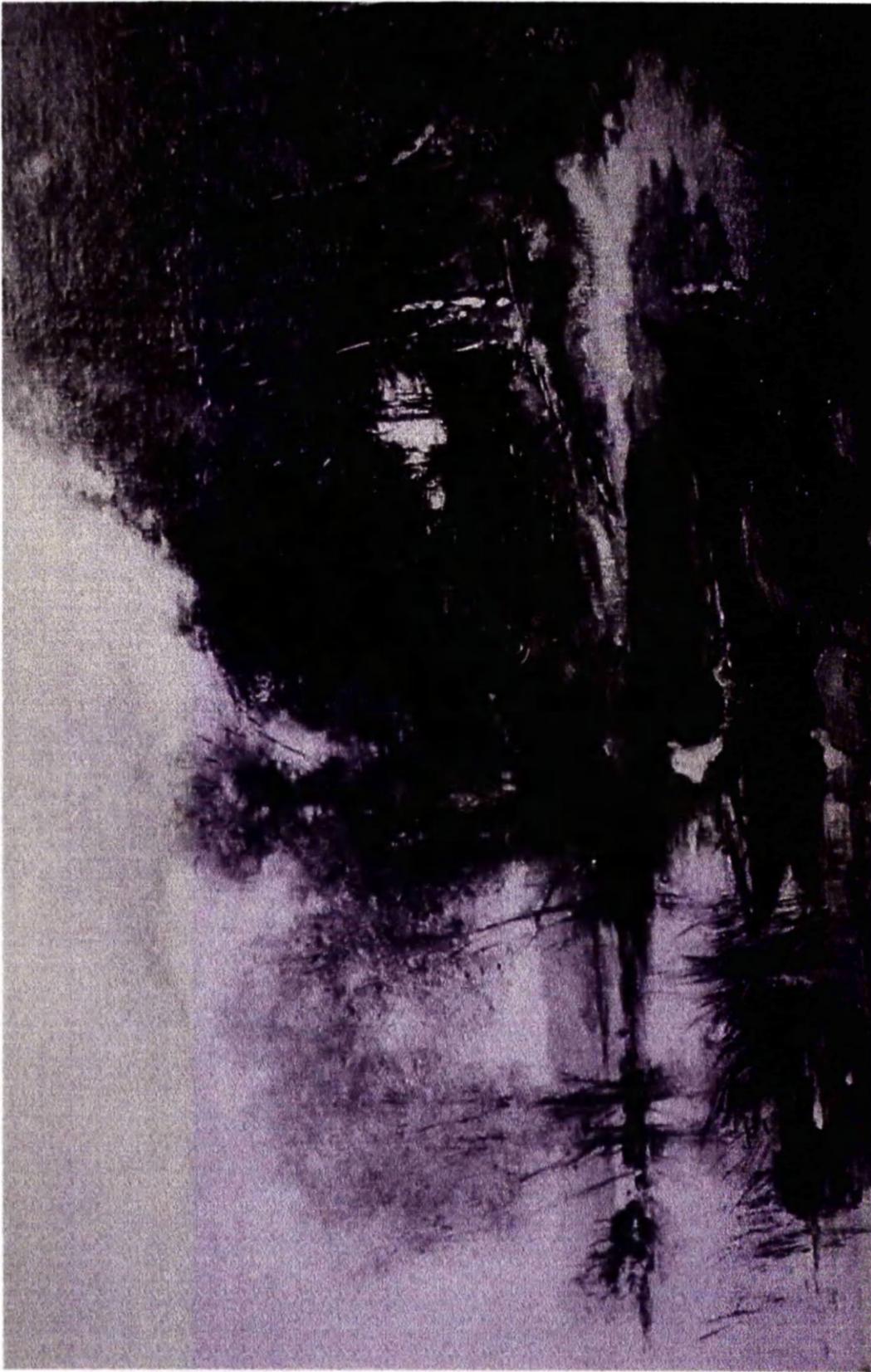


FIGURE 3. Alfred Wahlberg, *Landscape with Bay*, ca 1860 *b/w*

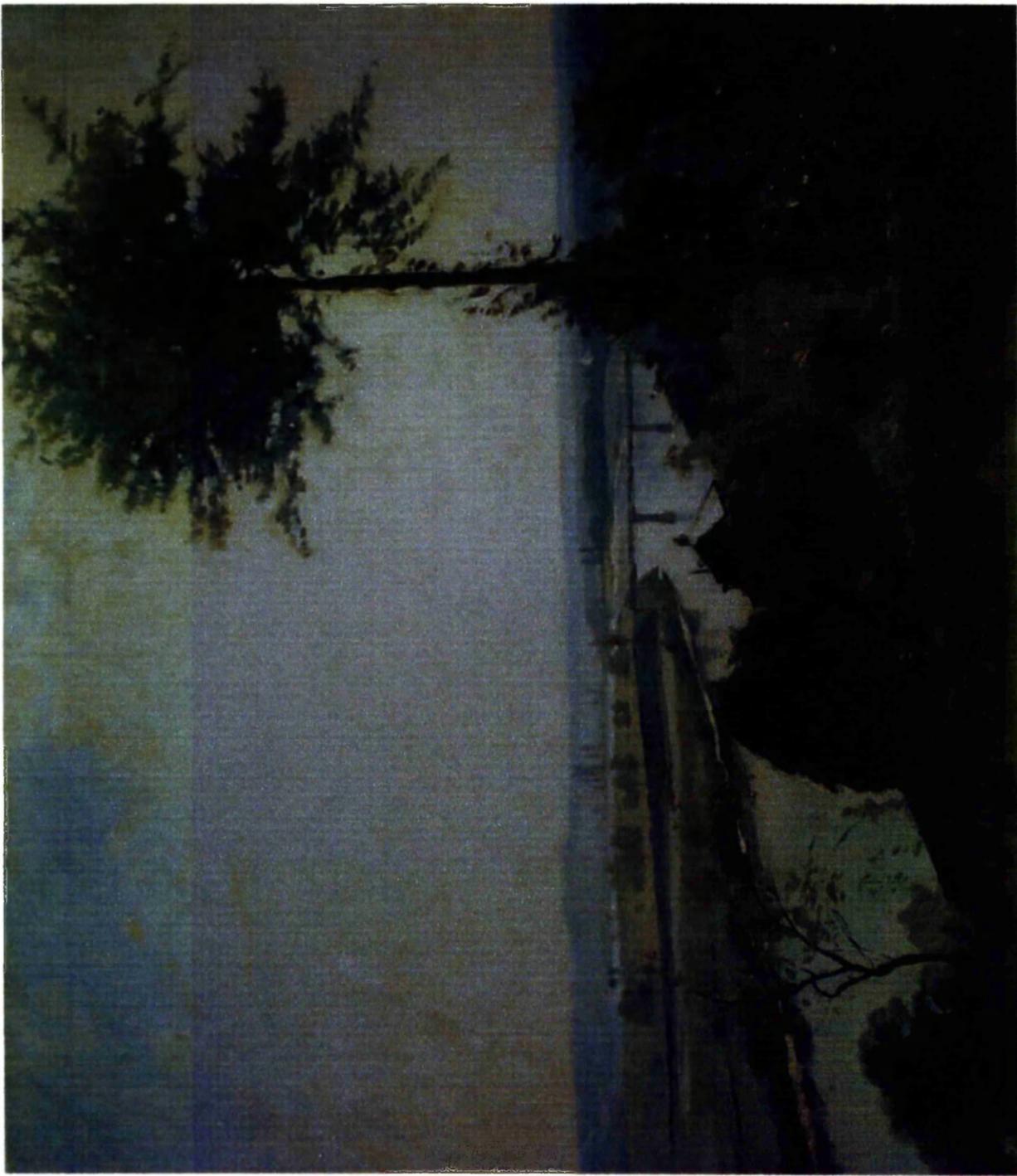


FIGURE 4. Carl Fredrik Hill, *Landscape from Seine*, 1877



FIGURE 5. Jean-Francois Millet, *The Shepherdess and her Flock*, 1862-64



FIGURE 6. Jules Bastien-Lepage, *The Haymakers*, 1878



FIGURE 7. Anders Zorn *Mora Fair*, 1892



FIGURE 8. Gustaf Cederström, *Bringing Home the Body of King Karl XII of Sweden*, 1884

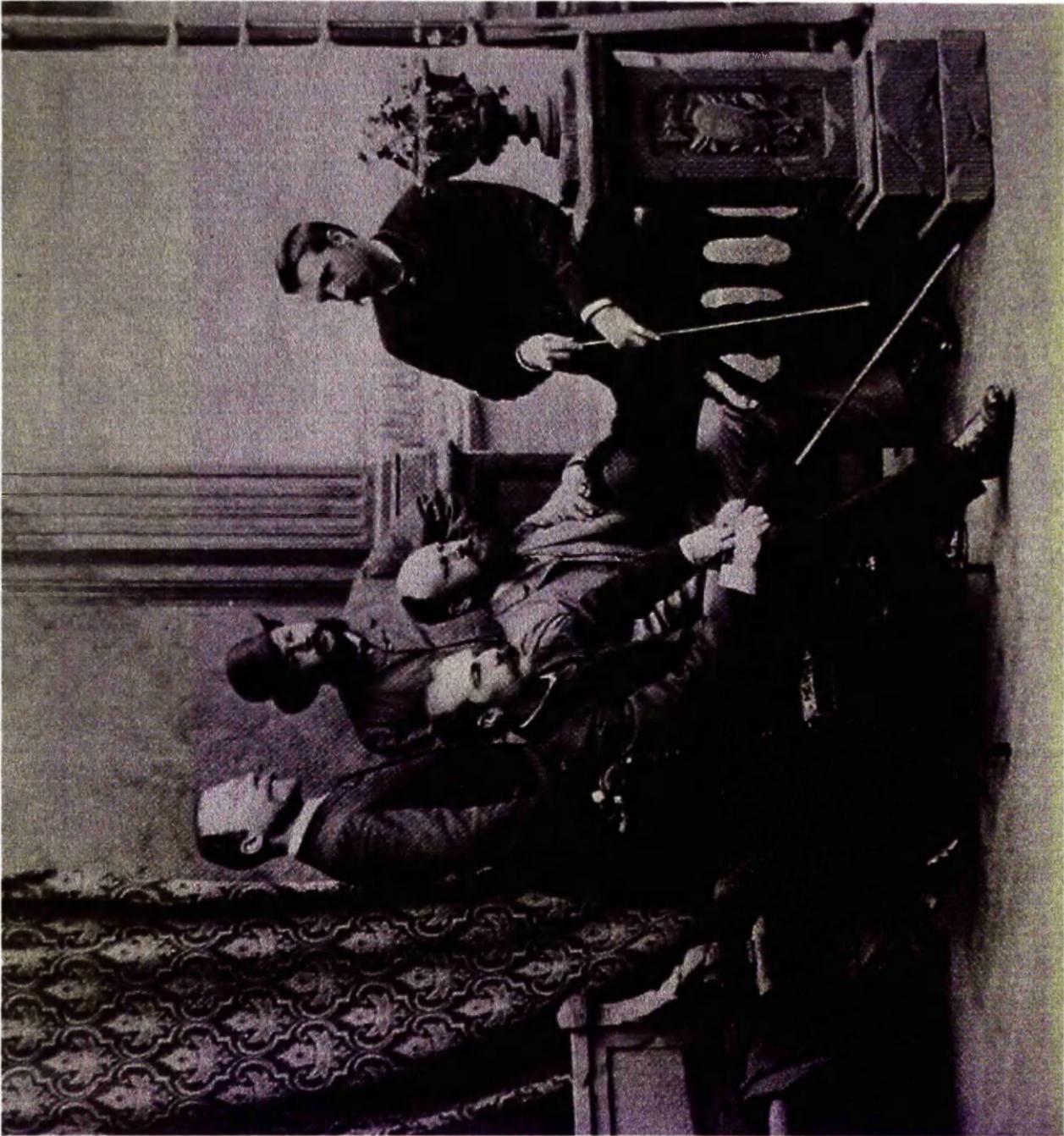


FIGURE 9. The Swedish Opponent Group 1885.
Standing From Left; Carl Larsson, Ernst Josephson
Seated From Left; Richard Bergh, August Hagborg, Per Hasselberg

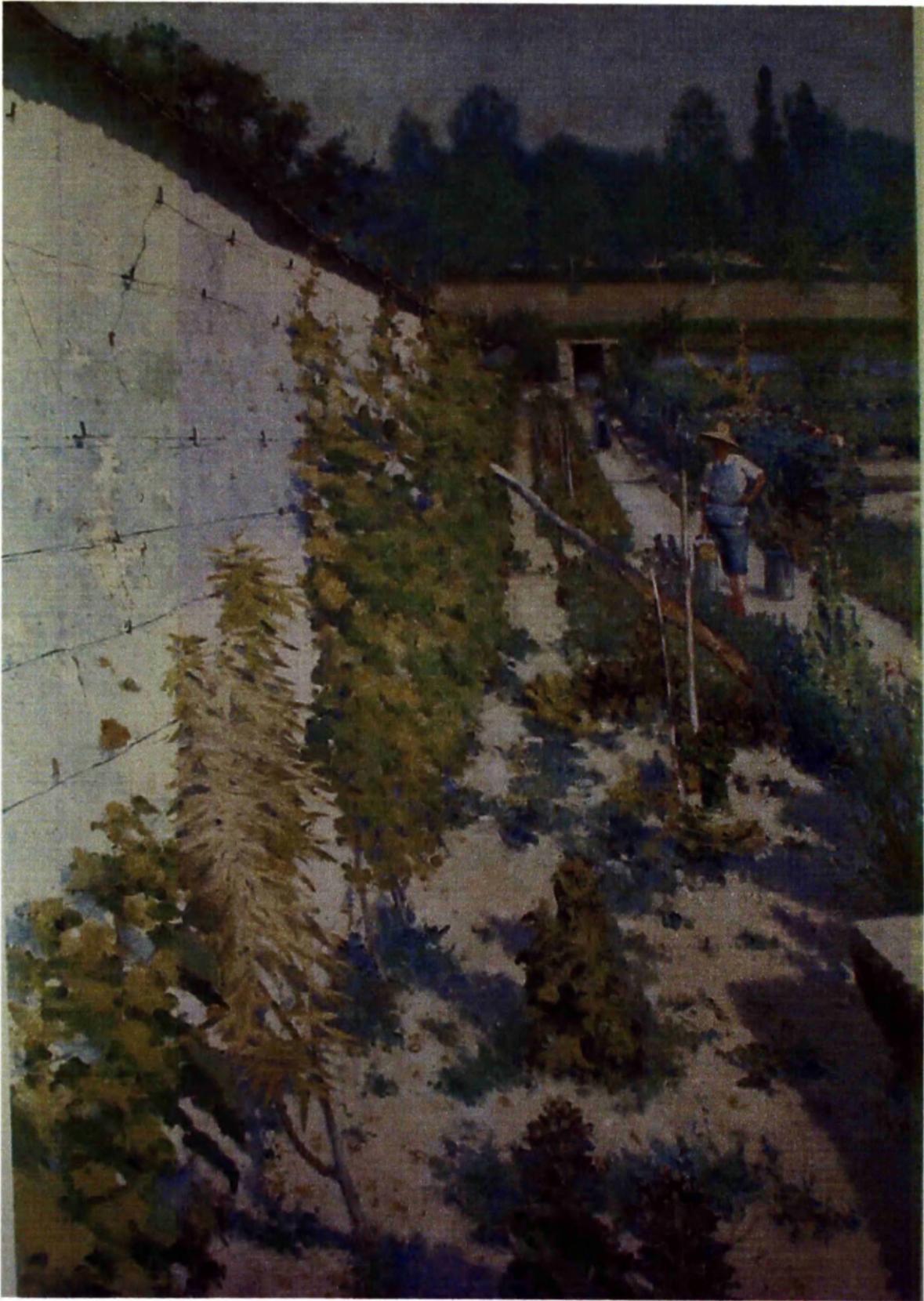


FIGURE 10. Karl Nordström, *Garden in Grez*, 1884



FIGURE 11. Ernst Josephson, *The Spanish Blacksmiths*, 1881



FIGURE 12. Nils Kreuger, *Snow in Paris*, 1885



FIGURE 13. Puvis de Chavannes, *Pastoral*, 1882



FIGURE 14. Arnold Böcklin, *The Sacred Wood*, 1882



FIGURE 15. Arnold Böcklin, *Island of the Dead*, 1883



FIGURE 16. Nils Kreuger, *Spring Plowing*, 1884



FIGURE 17. Auguste Renoir, *La Boulangère*, 1904



FIGURE 18. Elias Martin, *View from Fersen's Terrass*, 1800



FIGURE 19. Carl Johan Fahlcrantz, *Trollhättans Fall*, 1828



FIGURE 20. Nils Jacob Blommér, *The Dance of Elves*, 1849

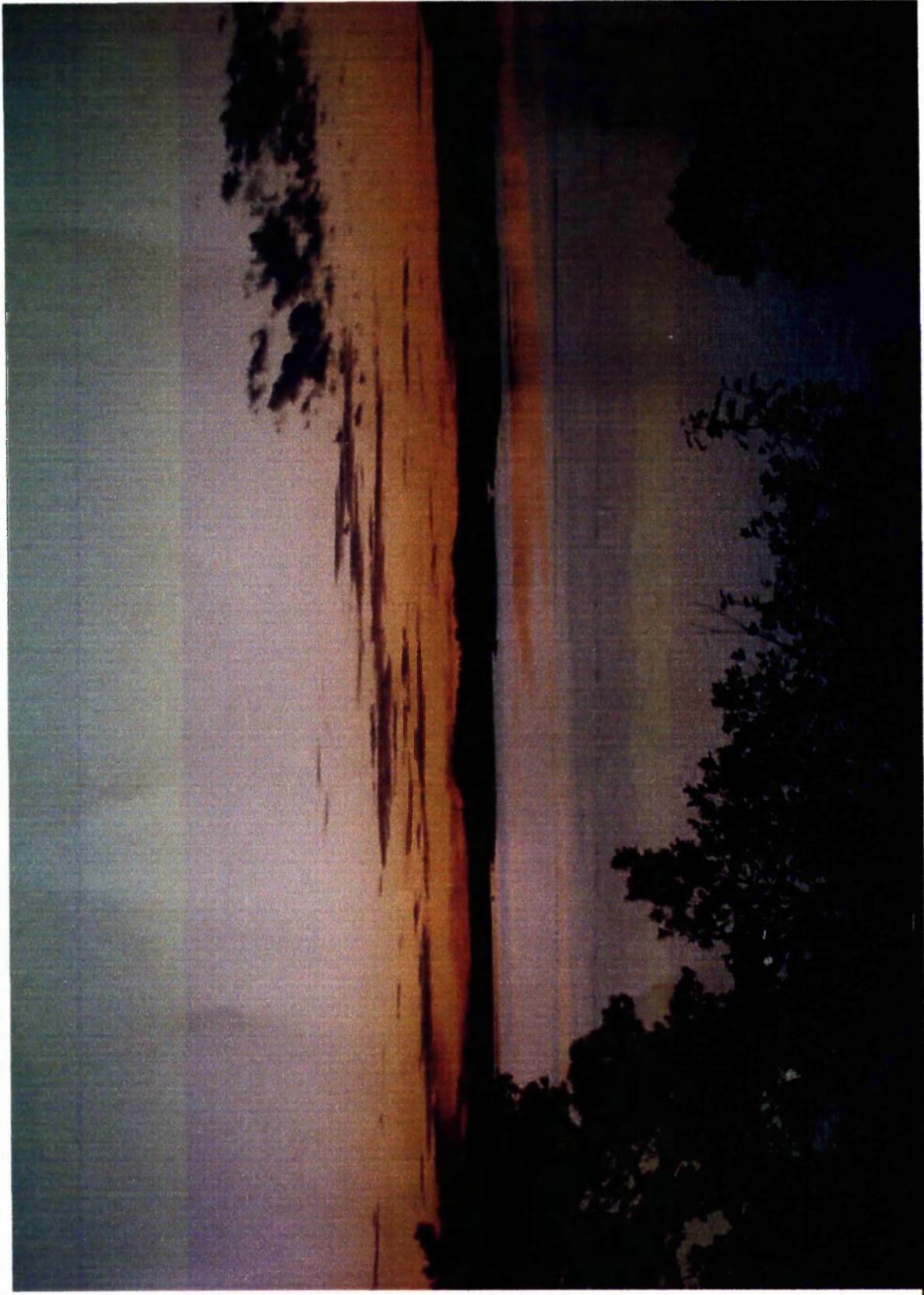


FIGURE 21. Photograph by Author, *Twilight Dalarö*, 2000

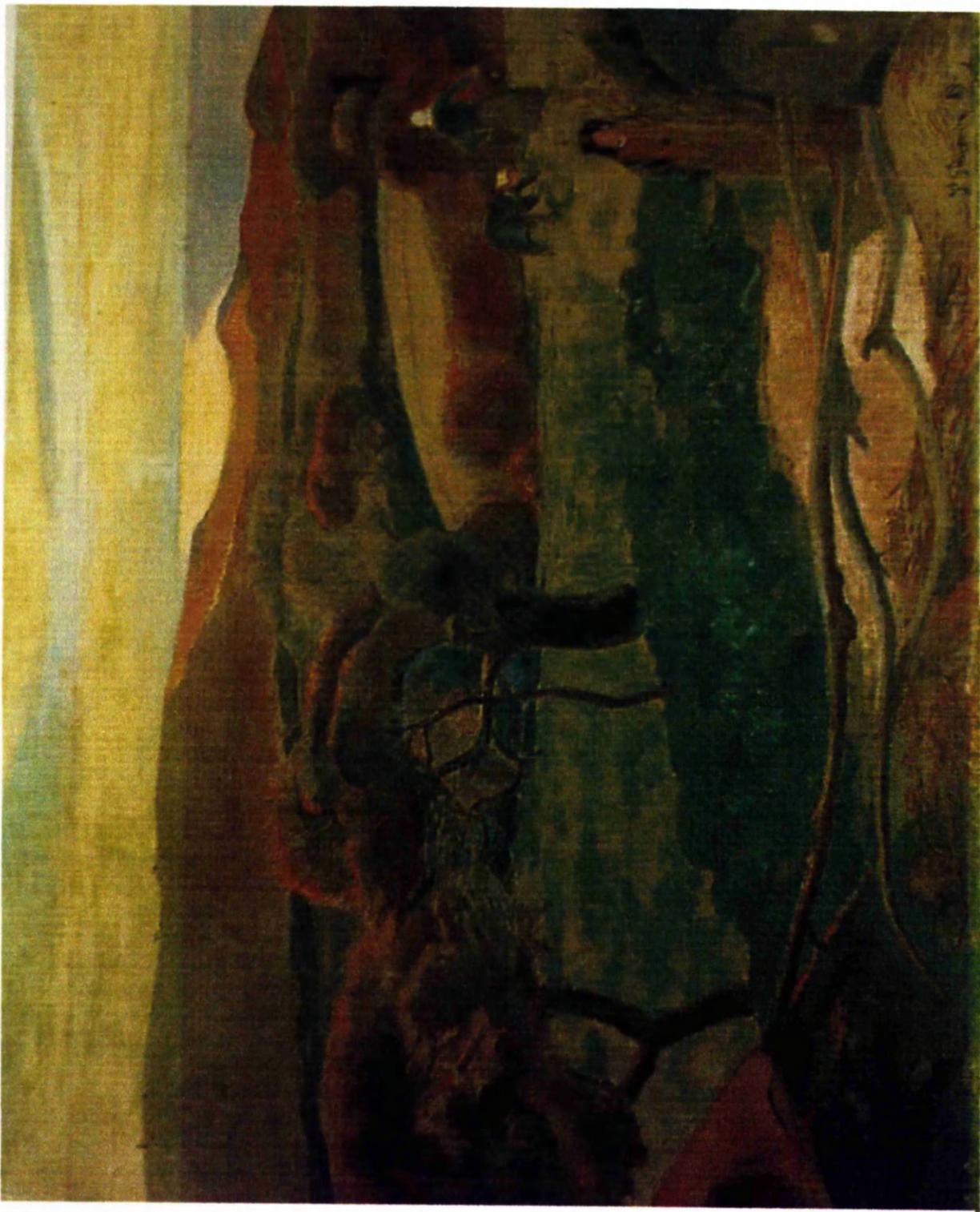


FIGURE 22. Paul Gauguin, *Landscape from Brittany*, 1889



FIGURE 23. Karl Nordström, *Varberg Fortress*, 1893



FIGURE 24. Prince Eugen, *The Old Castle*, 1893



FIGURE 25. Vincent van Gogh, *Flowering Garden*, 1888



FIGURE 26. Carl Larsson, *Daughter of Eve*, 1888-1894

Exhibition Sequence and Sections

Entrance

Plate 6 *The Water Sprite*, by Ernst Josephson

Swedish Life

Plate 9 *Crayfishing*, by Carl Larsson

Plate 10 *The Flower Window*, by Carl Larsson

Plate 18 *Fishermen's Wives Returning from Church*, by Carl Wilhelmson

Plate 19 *Frileuse*, by Anders Zorn

Plate 20 *Midsummer Dance*, by Anders Zorn

Landscape and Nature

Plate 2 *Landscape from Halland*, by Richard Bergh

Plate 3 *Winter Moonlight*, by Gustaf Fjaestad

Plate 7 *Two Cows on the Beach*, by Nils Kreuger

Plate 11 *Cat and Bird's Nest*, by Bruno Liljefors

Plate 13 *Stormy Clouds*, by Karl Nordström

Plate 16 *The Cloud*, by Prince Eugen

Plate 17 *Snowstorm at Sea*, by August Strindberg

The Twilight

Plate 1 *Silence*, by Richard Bergh

Plate 4 *Riddarfjärden in Stockholm*, by Eugene Jansson

Plate 5 *Nocturne*, by Eugene Jansson

Plate 8 *Varberg Castle*, by Nils Kreuger

Plate 12 *Morning*, by Bruno Liljefors

Plate 14 *Varberg Fortress*, by Karl Nordström

Plate 15 *Forest Clearing*, by Prince Eugen

GLOSSARY

Art Nouveau

Decorative style that prospered from 1890, emerged as a reaction to academic "historicism". It is based on plant forms and shows flowing asymmetrical lines.¹

The Artists Association (Konstnärstörbundet)

Formed in 1886 with the Opponents group and Ernst Josephson at its helm, to organize art exhibition.

Barbizon School

Group of French landscape painters painting directly from nature. Their strong feeling for nature, may be regarded as a form of revolt of urban life.

Dagens Nyheter

One of Sweden's biggest daily newspapers, founded in 1864.

Ecole des Beaux-Arts

Its origins goes back to 1648, it is one of three socially prestigious institutions, enjoying political and economic support from the state. These were the Academie des Beaux-Arts, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and the Salon.²

¹ The Oxford Dictionary of Art

² P.69 Modernity and Modernism

Count Carl August Ehrensvärd (1745-1800)

Artist and philosopher during the reign of Gustav III.

Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1865-1931)

Finish painter, a major figure in the Art Nouveau and Symbolist movements. He travelled widely and was well known outside Finland.³

Erik Gustaf Geijer (1783-1847)

Historian, composer who founded Götiska Förbundet, to revive the ancient Nordic ideals.

Verner von Heidenstam (1859-1940)

Writer and rewarded the Nobel Prize 1916. He reacted against Naturalism in the 1890s. His later writings expressed warm patriotism.

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906)

Norwegian writer. With A Dollhouse, a satirical contemporary drama, he became world famous. During the 1880s his style became more Symbolic.

³ Art and Artists

Jean-Francois Millet (1814-1875)

French painter, moved to Barbizon in 1849, painted mainly peasants.

Edvard Munch (1863-1944)

Norwegian painter. He ranks as one of the most influential of modern artist. He and van Gogh are regarded as the main sources of Expressionist art.⁴

Naturalism

Term denoting an approach to art in which the artist endeavours to represent objects as they are empirically observed, rather than in a stylized or conceptual manner conditioned by intellectual preconceptions or other factors.⁵

Plein-Air Painting

Term used for a painting done in the open-air instead of in the studio. Painting out of doors did not become common until the 19th c.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772)

Natural scientist, philosopher and active in mysticism. Formulated a number of philosophical thesis about the relationship between the material and spiritual worlds.

⁴ Art and Artist

⁵ The Oxford Dictionary of Art

Symbolism

It has its origin in France and flourished c. 1885-1910. Its main characteristic is the rejection of direct representation in favour of evocation. Symbolism ignores traditional iconography and instead use subjects that express ideas beyond the objects depicted. The expressive potential of simplified forms and pure colour provided the freedom and directness that young, academically trained students were looking for. Ideas based on the rise of the scientific psychology with its emphasis on individual freedom and the great interest in the occult, played a part in Symbolism.⁶

Synthetism

Simplification of forms into a large-scale pattern and expressive purification of colour. It has affinities with the more literary symbolism.⁷ Northern landscape painting is described as Synthetist because of its formal simplifications and concentrations. But it may sometimes be called Symbolist because of its close identification of visual form and invisible content.

Esalas Tegner (1782-1846)

Swedish writer who wrote Frithiofs Saga 1825, inspired by an Icelandic folktale, became a national poem and was translated to several European languages.

⁶ P.169 Dictionary of Art

⁷ The Oxford Dictionary of Art

Emile Zola (1840-1902)

French writer who had developed a naturalistic style that is fully developed in

Therese Raquin, published in 1867.

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