The goal of Swedish National Romantic artists had both a social and a personal dimension. While they wanted to promote a generic Swedish national identity and rootedness in habitus through their art, they also wanted to express their own innermost feelings. Their social concerns were part of the politically progressive social democracy movement that gained momentum throughout the 1890s. The Swedish National Romantics rebelled against the academic establishment while remaining connected to a thriving populist movement. Although they sought to dissociate themselves from the cosmopolitanism of France and the Continent, their need for self-expression was in fact conceptually linked to French Naturalism (though the Swedes largely abandoned this style) as well as French Symbolism. Indeed, to shift from Naturalism (representing nature from a personal perspective) to Symbolism (representing personal feelings through natural imagery) involved only a small step. Like the French Symbolists of the fin de siècle, National Romantics wanted to convey the ineffable. To do this they focused, not on the outward appearance of nature (natura naturata), but on nature’s creative process (natura naturans), positing the existence of a suprasensory spiritual world accessible through intuition. The English Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge had condemned the superficiality of recording mere appearances, urging artists and writers to probe deeper to reveal the spiritual link between nature and the human soul.¹

Jean Moréas coined the term “Symbolism” in his literary manifesto, published 18 September 1886 in Le Figaro. There he declared Symbolists the “enemies of didactic pursuits, of declamation, of false sensitivity, of objective description,”² a definition so general as to be almost useless. Some of these convictions were antithetical to National Romanticism, particularly the assertion

When [the artist] expresses his own longing for life in an art work, . . . he also expresses ours.
Richard Bergh
about "enemies of didactic pursuits, of declamation"; National Romantics were precisely the opposite.

While certain properties are associated with Symbolism, the movement itself is difficult to define. Few studies of Symbolist painting analyze, much less recognize, the idealism and decadence that motivated it and gave rise to works differing significantly in intent and meaning. The French literary historian Guy Michaud distinguishes between Symbolism, which is optimistic and intellectually detached and pursues a higher, universal reality, and Decadence, which is pessimistic, emotional, and solipsistic. The inaugural issue of the Parisian periodic Le Décadent, 10 April 1886, defined Decadence as "Schopenhauerism taken to extremes," referring to Arnold Schopenhauer's World as Will and Idea (1819), in which the philosopher deduced that suffering was an inevitable consequence of humanity's inherent "will to live." Only by renouncing all earthly desires could humans transcend their unhappy condition. This pessimism responded to the failure of positivism and to the alienation caused by the Industrial Revolution and the division of labor. Schopenhauer's disciples, French as well as German, disseminated his ideas in France beginning in the 1870s.

Symbolist paintings generally contain strong elements of Decadence: one finds little optimism in Franz von Stuck, little detachment in Edvard Munch, and little universality in Fernand Khnopff, all considered Symbolist painters. Furthermore, Symbolist painting has an elitist dimension. Maurice Denis, generally grouped with the Symbolists, advocated the "universal triumph of the imagination of the aesthetes over crude imitation; triumph of the emotion of the Beautiful over the naturalist deceit." While National Romantics would have approved Denis's celebration of emotion and the victory of náüura naturatu over náüura naturata, they would have objected to art as delineated by Denis. For National Romantics the aesthetic sense was universal and intrinsic, Richard Bergh insisted that it is "one of humanity's most general, important, and basic qualities. This populist conviction, tied to social democratic ideology, distinguished National Romanticism from Symbolism.

Bergh's statement suggests how social and personal imperatives dovetailed in National Romanticism. The belief in a cultural collective unconscious meant that National Romantics accepted the resonance of authentic personal expression in other individuals belonging to the culture. While National Romanticism's preoccupation with cultural values was related to Symbolism's concern for metaphysical truths, National Romanticism's inherently altruistic social character was at odds with Symbolism's withdrawal from worldly matters. Such aloofness and elitism translated into the Symbolists' general lack of concern for the working class as representatives of the social reality these painters sought to escape. Nevertheless, Symbolism did offer certain strategies that National Romantics could adapt to their own purposes.

In cultures where National Romanticism emerged, Symbolist paintings were influenced by an interest in nationalism and primitivism that made these works look different from those of mainstream Symbolism. National Romanticism is thus related to, but not synonymous with, Symbolism.

Only in countries where a strong nationalistic movement was afoot (for example, in the Nordic countries, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, and Russia) did Symbolism serve a larger purpose. Elsewhere, it was characterized by extreme individualism, even solipsism. Broadly speaking, "solipsistic" Symbolism was primarily figurative, whereas "nationalistic" Symbolism focused on the landscape. Yet the emphasis of both strains on personal expression encouraged a proliferation of personal styles. To avoid confusion, I will use the term "National Romanticism" to refer to nationalistic Symbolism, and "Symbolism" to refer to the solipsistic variety.

In Sweden, the Symbolist influence came directly from Paris. Although many Opponent artists knew German and traveled occasionally to Germany, they were intellectually oriented toward France. For many of them, changing trains in Hamburg on route to Paris was the extent of their German experience. In addition, progressive Swedish intellectuals strongly identified with the Republican heritage of the French Revolution and its objectives of liberty, equality, and solidarity. Swedish artists absorbed French Symbolist precepts in various ways. Richard Bergh and Georg Pauli read Symbolist literature and criticism, and Pauli, at least, attended lectures. They talked to their colleagues, who were already familiar with the paintings of such Symbolist precursors as Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, James McNeill Whistler, and Arnold Böcklin. Like their continental colleagues, Scandinavian painters defined Symbolism dialectically against Naturalism. According to Pauli, Naturalism forbade "all subjects from the world of imagination, dreams, history, legend, and myth"—precisely the subjects preoccupying National Romantic painters. Swedish National Romantics were attracted to Symbolism because it corroborated an imperative they already accepted, to express in their imagery the values and ideals embedded in the Swedish habitation.

While the Swedes primarily absorbed those ideas compatible with National Romantic ideology, several flirted with pure Symbolism. Just as they had wholeheartedly embraced Naturalism, some Swedes initially followed Symbolist impulses without fully digesting them. An example of this is Georg Pauli's 1888 painting Legend (Plate 3), evidencing an attraction to mythical lore in its depiction of a young woman spinning the thread of her life onto a distaff; her partial nudity evokes allegorical associations with Truth and Beauty. Beside her, in a
black cowl, sits Fate, hunched forward with a pair of scissors, poised to snip the thread. The calm expression and unfocused gaze of the young woman suggest she is oblivious to the threat; the tranquil landscape setting reflects her serenity.

The inspiration for *Legend* came directly from Puvis de Chavannes, who, along with Böcklin, was the most important artistic source for Swedish National Romantic painters prior to 1892. Among the eighty-four works in Puvis's solo exhibition at Durand-Ruel in November–December 1887 was the *Sacred Grove, Beloved of the Arts and Muses*, executed for the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon (Fig. 53), which Pauli had also seen at the 1884 Salon. *Legend* evinces the subdued tonalities, static composition, and idealized figural and landscape elements of Puvis's painting. Pauli also found appealing what Bergh described as Puvis's ability to “suggest a mood of the soul,” for Pauli too wanted to explore the subterranean emotive possibilities of painting.

Puvis and other artists seeking to escape the unpleasant aspects of modern industrial society took refuge in the pastoral idylls of Theocritus and Virgil. Because Puvis's paintings were serene, harmonious evocations of a distant past, the French Symbolists admired them. Puvis appealed to a wide range of artists, from the emotional pantheist Vincent van Gogh to the restrained Roman Catholic Maurice Denis. When van Gogh saw a study of Puvis's *Inter Artes et Naturam*, the mural for the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen, at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars in 1890, he had “the feeling of being present at a rebirth, total but benevolent, of all the things one should have believed in, should have wished for.”

Mood, an important element in National Romantic painting, characterized some works by Puvis and Böcklin and Symbolist painting in general. But moody landscapes were not necessarily National Romantic. A group of French artists called the Nostalgiques (including Denis, Ker-Xavier Roussel, and Aristide Maillo) expressed their innermost feelings through landscape, but their works, like the paintings of Puvis they emulated, were imaginative fabrications motivated by an escapism contrary to the impulse behind the landscapes of National Romantic painters. The Nostalgiques' images evoked a mythical past as "a route of escape from the detested present." Usually these paintings contained figures, as in the Nabis artist Maurice Denis's *April* (Fig. 54); uninhabited landscapes were more frequent in Swedish mood paintings.

The dissociation of matter from spirit characterizing Symbolism reflected the alienation of the individual. National Romantic artists sought to reintegrate the individual into society in a meaningful way rather than to withdraw into the safety of an inner world, like the Symbolists. This dichotomy between Symbolism and National Romanticism becomes evident in a comparison of two paintings, both entitled *Silence*. In the first, by Odilon Redon (Fig. 55), cited by Robert Goldwater "as an epitome of symbolist style and intent," a somnolent figure holds two fingers to her lips. A mood of mystery infuses the image. The head is removed from any physical context, and neither its body nor its surroundings are visible. In Bergh's *Silence* (Fig. 56), in contrast, the landscape conveys a sense of silence rather than the literal description and exhortation of Redon's. Cen-


tered in a low, white wall, suggesting a cemetery, is a black and gold gate, beyond it a line of poplars with the city wall of Visby behind them. Bergh recorded this scene in a lucid, symmetrical composition designed to communicate intuitively with viewers; Redon relied on rhetorical gesture. Bergh’s image is simple, Redon’s, sophisticated and literate. Bergh appealed to the heart, Redon to the intellect. In these discrepancies lie the essential differences between Symbolist and National Romantic painting.

Pauli thought that Bergh’s *Silence*, which he referred to as *The Graveyard*, was based on “an impression of Böcklin,” a painter the National Romantics greatly admired. Böcklin’s *Island of the Dead* (Fig. 57), included in a portfolio of forty of his reproductions that Bergh owned, may have been the painting Bergh referred to in a letter to his wife from Berlin in April 1893, when he wrote of “going to see a wonderful Böcklin.” Georg Nordensvan called *Island of the Dead* “a painted poem.” Bergh, in an 1894 letter to Pauli, proudly announced that one of his own paintings, a portrait, hung in the same room as a Böcklin at the Munich Secession exhibition. *Island of the Dead* secured a place in Swedish cultural history in 1907, when Strindberg specified it as the backdrop for the final scene of his play *A Ghost Sonata*.

Viktor Rydberg, in an 1894 essay entitled “Something about Arnold Böcklin,” pinpointed the appeal of the Swiss painter for National Romantics. Böcklin, he wrote, is “one of the very few in whom the myth-building imagination of prehistoric peoples has arisen anew in our bustling, practical era: one of those who feel what the primitive German [*Urgermanen*] was feeling in the holy forests at twilight.” Rydberg’s response helps to explain why Böcklin came to Prince Eugen’s mind in *Fjällskäfte* at the moment he was inspired to paint *The Forest* (see Fig. 49). When Prince Eugen received a book containing Böcklin reproductions for Christmas in 1892, he was delighted. His only complaint was that it lacked *Island of the Dead*. In a letter to Helena Nyblom, the prince mentioned
that Ellen Key had a reproduction of this painting and that he would buy one as soon as possible: "If one had that in one's bedroom, then one could certainly tolerate a lot."\(^{18}\) The copy he bought hangs in the library of his home, Waldemarsudde (now a museum), in Stockholm, the only reproduction amid the works there. Böcklin epitomized the link between nature and the imagination explored by Swedish National Romantics. They shared his interest in probing nature's metaphysical elements to discover its mysteries.

In 1897 Georg Brandes reexamined the writings of Emile Zola, the French Naturalist author who had helped to awaken progressive Swedish artists to their social responsibilities, and concluded that Zola was not a Naturalist but a Symbolist. Brandes interpreted Zola's definition of Naturalism, "a corner of nature seen through a temperament," as equivalent to a definition of Symbolism, "nature seen through the imagination."\(^{19}\) Bergh had realized this parallel in 1886. He explained Zola's phrase "la nature vue à travers un cerveau humain" as a subjective interpretation of the world communicated by exaggerating certain features and subordinating others.\(^{20}\) In this rereading of the Naturalist imperative, Zola became relevant to artists seeking to escape Naturalism's focus on the material world.

Ernst Josephson's *Water Sprite* (Plate 2) was the first late-nineteenth-century Swedish painting to extol the power of the imagination. It anticipated key elements of both National Romantic primitivism and Symbolism as they emerged in painting. Among the important Symbolist ideas embodied in *Water Sprite* were the primacy of the imagination and the expression in painting of a transcendent idea—both a pictorial equivalent of a personal experience and an emotional construct. The painting had been inspired by a vision, allying Josephson with the French Symbolists, who cultivated such experiences. The narrator in Victor-Emile Michelet's 1891 novella "The Redemptress" reflects: "It is certainly true that this apparition, destined to have such a decisive influence on my future life, would constitute what the vulgar call a hallucination. But what is a hallucination, if not the projection onto the visible plane of an invisible reality obeying the summons of the imagination?"\(^{21}\) By giving form to a hallucination, Josephson validated an intuitive connection between nature and feelings. He was the first Nordic artist of his generation to negotiate a compromise between nature and subjective experience. That he did so far in advance of his colleagues accounted for their initial resistance to *Water Sprite* (see p. 97). Indeed, the imagination was not a common topic even in French literary journals until after 1885.

This impulse to transcend constituted another syncretic neoromantic aspect of Symbolism and National Romanticism. A century earlier, the German Romantic writer Friedrich Novalis declared that "the wall separating fable from truth, past from present, has fallen, and it is with faith, the imagination, and poetry that we unveil the essence of the world."\(^{22}\) A similar dissolution of boundaries between matter and spirit, intellect and emotion typified Symbolist art. Josephson's painting—both in concept and in subject—effected such a dissolution: the water sprite, as a fallen angel yearning for redemption, symbolized the desire for transcendence.

Josephson's repeated painting and drawing of the water sprite indicate the profound personal meaning it held for him. Indeed, he himself assumed the persona of the water sprite in an undated poem,\(^{23}\) clearly identifying with this archetypal symbol of despair and alienation, who first emerged in his work during a stressful period of an 1878 trip to Rome. Uprooted and alone, Josephson dwelt intensely in his inner world. At that time, the water sprite symbolized for him the Nordic forest and expressed his feelings of home-longing. His preoccupation with water sprite paintings during the mid-1880s suggests that he was grappling with emotions that found no other suitable outlet; the intensity of his vigorous brushwork hints at the psychological instability that led to a complete mental breakdown in 1888. At the same time, he manifested a prescient urge to reconcile nature with the imagination.

*Water Sprite* was as revelatory for Swedish artists as Paul Sérusier's *Talisman* (1888, private collection) was for French painters a few years later, and for many of the same reasons. When Sérusier showed his murky landscape (painted on a cigar box lid) to his colleagues Pierre Bonnard and Paul Ranson, they realized "that every work of art is a transposition, a caricature, the impassioned equiv-
FIG. 58. Carl Larsson, Rococo, 1888-89.

alent of a received sensation." Water Sprite and The Talisman, by freeing painters from mimesis, marked a modernist breakthrough, opening to artists an exciting new world where they could create visual languages appropriate to their feelings and ideas. Water Sprite had a direct impact on three subsequent works: Carl Larsson's Daughter of Eve, Bergh's Vision: Motif from Visby, and Prince Eugen's Old Castle.

Daughter of Eve (Plate 4) was not only Larsson's most unusual work but also his purest Symbolist painting, the only one with Decadent overtones. Painted in Paris and exhibited in 1888 in Copenhagen under the title The Temptation of Saint Anthony, it was also his most erotic and cryptic work. Larsson executed it during a period of growing family responsibilities—his wife, Karin, was pregnant with the third of their seven children—and at a time when he was also preoccupied with monumental commissions: a proposal for the foyer of Stockholm's Nationalmuseum and a triptych for the Göteborg collector Pontus Fürstenberg symbolizing Renaissance, Rococo, and Modern art. In the triptych, a decorous allegory, only the seductive shepherdess of Rococo (Fig. 58) suggests the lasciviousness of Daughter of Eve.

The element of private fantasy as well as the use of gilding allied Daughter of Eve to Josephson's Water Sprite. Ultraviolet examination of Larsson's canvas reveals that the gilding of the serpent and the apple belongs to the painting's first phase rather than to the reworking of 1894, suggesting that Larsson admired Josephson's painting (with its gilded fiddle) well before Swedish artists "rediscovered" it in 1893. But the similarities between these works extend beyond the technical and thematic: the nude in each painting represents the sex to which the painter was attracted (Josephson was homosexual) and bears an ecstatic facial expression; and both works starkly contrast pale flesh to a dark setting that includes unnaturally growing flowers. Symbolists were eternally searching for equivalents, and in Daughter of Eve Larsson, like the mythological sculptor Pygmalion, created an image to fulfill his erotic fantasies. There is nothing National Romantic in this painting. It is pure Symbolism.

It took Bergh several years to discover the protean meaning of Josephson's painting; he began work on Vision: Motif from Visby (Fig. 59) several months after the 1893 Josephson exhibition. Even the word "vision" in the title documents the Symbolist origin of the subject, in the artist's own imagination. Despite the different subjects—Nordic nature for Josephson, Swedish medieval history for Bergh—both works represent National Romantic themes with sources in the Swedish habitus.

Vision: Motif from Visby depicts the invasion by the Danish king Valdemar Atterdag in 1361, an event that initiated the city's decline as a Hanseatic power. The king's ships landed near Visby, and his troops slaughtered Gotland's peasant army (more than eighteen hundred men) while Visby's army watched passively from the city ramparts. The Danes plundered nearby villages and churches and, in return for sparing the city itself, exacted its treasures. Much of Atterdag's booty, however, was lost with a ship that sank in a storm on the return to Denmark. In recording this event, Bergh reminded his Swedish audience of their cultural heritage in a visual language more appropriate to dreams than to historical narrative.

In a June 1893 letter to Fürstenberg, Bergh wrote: "I am doing studies and sketches for paintings I anticipate starting on this winter. . . . I have already begun to underpaint one of the paintings out here and think that it will be quite good. It is a magnificent motif—a view of the ring walls here, with the sea in the back-
ground various shades of blue and King Valdemar's fleet sailing in it. The story was familiar to Swedes from their school days. Bergh may have remembered it as he sailed toward the harbor in June 1893. For him as for other National Romantic artists and writers, historical events and places fired the imagination, and in departing from precise historical narrative, they gained a deeper understanding of their meaning. Artists and intellectuals recognized that representations of Visby and other historical monuments could encourage Swedes to dream Swedish dreams, which themselves served to liberate creativity while strengthening the bonds of national identity.

Bergh emphasized the fantastic nature of his subject by recording a medieval event in a contemporary setting; in his painting Visby's ring wall stands in its modern state of partial ruin. More important, Bergh's choice of unnaturally bright colors was inspired, at least in part, by Josephson, whom Bergh proclaimed "the only real colorist among us." Gauguin and van Gogh, whose works Bergh had also recently seen, provided an additional incentive for this approach to color. Bergh's use of gilding further links him to Josephson, although Pauli recalled in his memoirs that the Danish painter Agnes Slott-Møller exhibited a seascape with a gilded frigate at the Copenhagen exhibition of Den Frie Udstillings, which Bergh had visited in the spring of 1893. In any event, this is the only time in his career that he resorted to gilding.

The Symbolist impulse entered the work of Nordic artists subtly as they modified Naturalism to suggest the presence of unseen forces. By the late 1880s, however, they were investing everyday motifs with a deeper meaning by subduing narrative and heightening mood. Bergh's Hypnotic Seance (Fig. 60), executed in a Naturalist idiom, evidenced this shift in artistic intentions. Bergh's analytical approach, his concentration on an unfolding drama, and his selective focus (some objects are rendered more summarily than others) allied him to Naturalism. But the intimacy and emotion of this work are highlighted when it is contrasted with André Brouillet's contemporaneous Realist depiction of a similar experiment, Charcot's Lecture (Fig. 61). Whereas physical distance in Brouillet's work reflects emotional distance and intellectual objectivity—the space is large and impersonal, and the viewer is kept at a remove from the main characters—in Bergh's scene viewers are drawn into the drama, made part of the small circle of rapt observers.

Although Bergh had witnessed a hypnotism in Stockholm in the early 1880s, the scene he depicted was inspired by an incident at Sannois. There, in 1882,
Bergh saw the Swedish physician Axel Munthe hypnotize a Danish woman, whose unsuccessful struggle to maintain ordinary consciousness impressed the artist. That same year the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot presented a paper at the French Academy of Sciences purporting to legitimize hypnotism as a field of scientific inquiry. Previously, it had been viewed by the scientific community as a kind of carnival entertainment. Bergh, who believed that spiritual forces complied with scientific laws, was intrigued by the debate about hypnotism and, committed to truthful representations, studied the practice further. He observed Dr. Dujardin-Beaumetz at a psychiatric hospital near Paris and attended hypnotic demonstrations held by the Société des sciences psychologiques at the Palais-Royal in Paris.

In *Hypnotic Seance* Bergh recorded the transition between psychic states; Brouillet depicted the aftermath of Charcot's hypnosis. In diminishing the physical and emotional interval between subject and object, viewer and viewed, Bergh promoted empathy in the viewer. Such an approach expresses his syncretic tendency. Like other National Romantics, he realized that the only way to achieve the utopian dream of a harmonious egalitarian society was to challenge traditional boundaries between classes, between history and daily life, between progress and preservation, between individual and society, and between consciousness and unseen forces.

Two essays published in 1889 were critical to the conceptual shift in Sweden from a Naturalist to a Symbolist aesthetic: Julius Lange's "Field Studies: Description. The Art of Memory" and Verner von Heidenstam's "Renaissance." Heidenstam condemned the superficial, trivial, and repressive character of Naturalism, whose claims to objectivity clashed with the sensual and emotional tendencies of the Swedish temperament. He noted that even the Swedish authors considered Naturalists—Strindberg, Geijerstam, and Carl Snoilsky—gave Naturalism a uniquely Swedish cast in their evocative descriptions of the landscape and their characters. Heidenstam believed that the expression of this "national character" in both the individual and society would bring about a renaissance like that of the fifteenth century, which gave rise to modern individualism. Imaginative powers and aesthetic sensibilities, moreover, would accompany the subjectivity and independence characterizing this rebirth. Many continental Symbolists described their own enterprise in similar terms.

In his essay, Lange contrasted Impressionism (an offshoot of Naturalism), an art of observation, with an art of memory, which, originating in the imagination, was the product of "the inner eye." Lange's notion that "the imagination's actual material is nothing other than memories" is confirmed by such works as *Water Sprite, The Forest,* and *Hypnotic Seance;* Josephson, Prince Eugen, and Bergh based these works on the memory of an epiphany. Lange also maintained that "human subjectivity processes, synthesizes, and re-creates all impressions," a description that applies equally well to the creative process of the Symbolists.

The extent to which Symbolist concepts informed National Romanticism is evident in Bergh's advice to artists eager to paint Nordic nature:

"To interpret this intractable nature with the brush one must not only open one's eyes but also understand the importance of sometimes closing them, to dream about what one saw, to poeticize it, weighing the multifarious visual impressions with feeling so as to discover the unity—in the baroic multiplicity and, finally, the decorative simplicity—that alone makes greatness possible in painting." Artists had to filter visual experience through their emotions and imagination before they could synthesize it and convey its essence. This typically Symbolist process was analogous to Caspar David Friedrich's recommendation that the Romantic artist "paint not only what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him." The similarity of the two statements points again to National Romanticism's philosophical roots in German Romanticism and to the general character of Symbolism as a neo-romantic movement.
Some Swedes were well acquainted with Symbolist currents circulating in Paris during the 1880s. Bergh, for example, read the Symbolist journal La Revue indépendante and the works of Joris-Karl Huysmans and Stéphane Mallarmé; he introduced the ideas he encountered to his colleagues. Bergh agreed with these Symbolists that the veil of appearances hid another reality, but this idea, far from being new to him, was familiar from the writings of Almgvist and Swedenborg. The Symbolist writers merely confirmed its validity. While Bergh embraced the elements of Symbolism that were consistent with National Romanticism, he rejected the elision of the French Symbolists and disagreed with Mallarmé's assertion that the external world only symbolized ideas. His belief in the universality of the aesthetic sense would have made repugnant to him Mallarmé's maxim that "a poem must be an enigma for the vulgar, chamber music for the initiated."33

Bergh and his progressive colleagues, once they had left Paris, kept abreast of intellectual and artistic developments there through younger colleagues, who went despite the Opponents' warnings about the overpowering and irrevocable influences they would encounter. As frustrated as the Opponents with study in Stockholm, the younger artists observed the beneficial effects of self-exile on their predecessors' work. No wonder they were determined to follow in the Opponents' footsteps. Their own immersion in Symbolism is evidenced by the "Symbolist" New Year's party the sculptor Christian Eriksæ old held in 1892 in his Paris studio.

Ivan Agueli was the most significant of the younger Swedish painters to visit Paris. He arrived in the spring of 1890 and began studying with Emile Bernard the following fall. Bernard introduced Agueli to Synthetist ideas he and Gauguin had developed at Pont-Aven in 1888, as well as to the Symbolist theories of Albert Aurier. Like Bergh and Josephson, Agueli explored the occult in Paris, particularly the syncretic ideas of theosophy. In the fall of 1891, after an extended stay on Gotland, Agueli returned to Stockholm, where he enthusiastically served as a conduit for the latest Parisian artistic and intellectual trends. He enrolled in the Artists' Association School in 1892, studying with Richard Bergh, who became a close friend. When Agueli returned to Paris in 1893, he reported to Bergh on Gauguin's recent Tahitian paintings and recommended to him the theoretical writings of Aurier.34

Swedish artists rarely referred to Symbolism in their correspondence. Bergh, however, wrote to Pauli from Visby in 1893 during the time he was working on The City Wall of Visby (see Fig. 14). He confessed that there "one immediately found Symbolist suggestion—a cloud was no longer merely a cloud but assumed a double meaning as in Maeterlinck—and so on."35 Bergh's letter suggests two assumptions: that Pauli knew Symbolist precepts and that he was familiar with

the Belgian poet's work, perhaps the recent collection Serres chaudes (1889), in which such allusions abound.

Maeterlinck fascinated Swedish intellectuals. When his play L'Oeuvre was performed in Stockholm in October 1895, the critic Tor Hedberg noted its pessimistic overtones in a review: "Humanity's world and nature's world are not divided. . . . Humanity understands its condition as little as plants do, is as little as they are, and stands as powerless as they against the inner and outer forces that determine its destiny.36 The link between people and nature reflected the primitivism of the National Romantics, but the conception of a world helpless before higher powers contradicted their belief in the powers of the individual. Bergh's letter to Pauli, written at the moment of transition in Swedish painting from Naturalism to National Romanticism, acknowledged the role of the imagination in transforming the external world, nature especially, into a network of meanings and thus signaled the Swedish painters' engagement with Symbolist ideas.

In an 1893 essay Bergh expanded on the "pure principle of unity" that was the basis for analogies he perceived between the visible and spiritual worlds. This principle, Bergh wrote, "weighs and appraises all the forms and colors of nature based on their inner correspondence."37 The reference to "correspondence" suggests his acquaintance with Baudelaire's famous poem "Correspondences," published in The Flowers of Evil (Les Fleurs du mal, 1857), whose contemplative mood and celebration of nature's evocative power were consistent with National Romantic aesthetics.

Bergh also knew about correspondences through reading Emanuel Swedenborg, whose theology, articulated in language modern readers may find somewhat cryptic, was based on such a concept, in which "whatever is from the Divine . . . descends into such things in nature as correspond to the Divine, and . . . conceal things Divine, which are called celestial and spiritual."38 Especially pertinent to the Swedish context was Swedenborg's assertion that ancient idolatries "derived . . . from the knowledge of correspondences . . . because all things that appear on the earth correspond; thus not only trees and plants, but also beasts and birds of every kind, as well as fishes and all other things. . . . Swedenborg expressed the primitive consciousness that the National Romantics incorporated into their construction of identity.

Bergh must have followed Agueli's advice to read Aurier, for in his 1893 essay "Emotional Art" he articulated ideas similar to those in Aurier's Cœurs posthumes. For Bergh, the emotional dimension of a painting gave it life and enabled it to impart fundamental truths to the viewer. An artist's emotions must be focused and intense to produce what Bergh referred to as a "painting of feel-
Similarly, Aurier wrote that the “transcendental emotivity” of a work “makes the soul tremble.” Bergh and Aurier shared a concern for communicating on a preconscious level and for dissolving barriers (such as a mediating intellect) between viewer, subject, and artist.

Furthermore, Bergh’s “trinity” of principles (see p. 109) were similar to Aurier’s categories for good art: Ideist, Symbolist, Synthetist, Subjective, and Decorative. Both authors discussed decorative painting, a practice Aurier defined as “the true art of painting.” Bergh concurred, asserting that the painting’s formal or decorative elements were the first to impress the viewer. Bergh, who generally credited his sources, did not cite Aurier here, acknowledging instead his debts to Goethe, Spencer, Baudelaire, and Ehrensvärd. Clearly there were numerous sources for such ideas in late-nineteenth-century Europe.

Both Aurier’s and Bergh’s philosophies of art were essentially Symbolist and neo-romantic. The purpose of art was to communicate primordial truths: for Aurier, the Idea, for Bergh, the Will to Live. While neither mentions Schopenhauer in his writings, it was almost as if each had read a different half of *The World as Will and Idea*. The fundamental difference between Bergh’s and Aurier’s ideas, which often overlap, can be understood vis-à-vis Schopenhauer, for whom the will is the life force animating the world, while the idea exists only in the realm of pure thought. For Aurier, inspiration came from within; it originated in the idea. For Bergh and all National Romantics, it came from nature as an expression of the will to live.

That certain ideas were simply “in the air” is evidenced by instances where Bergh anticipated Aurier’s ideas. Since the two were not acquainted and Aurier did not read Swedish, there is no possibility that Bergh’s ideas affected his. Bergh’s assertions in his 1886 essay “On the Necessity of Exaggeration in Art” (see p. 106) were confirmed five years later by Aurier: “The artist always has the right to exaggerate those directly significant qualities, . . . to deform them, not only according to his individual vision . . . but . . . according to the needs of the idea to be expressed.” While for Bergh the starting point was always nature, both he and Aurier argued for the efficacy of exaggeration in conveying an idea. They were sympathetic to similar elements of Symbolist theory circulating in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

Aurier’s essay “Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin” first appeared in the Parisian paper *Mercure de France* in 1891, where it undoubtedly attracted Bergh’s attention. The following year, on a trip to Copenhagen, Bergh purchased a painting by Gauguin from his Danish wife, Mette. And in May 1893 Bergh attended a large exhibition of Gauguin’s Breton and Tahitian paintings in Copenhagen. While there, Bergh met the organizer of the exhibition, Gauguin’s friend Jens Ferdinand Willumsen, who had founded the Danish secession movement. Willumsen had recently returned from a five-year sojourn in France, during which he had befriended Gauguin. Bergh, impressed by Gauguin’s paintings, was curious about the French artist. In his works Bergh discovered Synthetism, which offered him and his colleagues technical strategies for expressing individual feelings while remaining true to the Swedish *habitus*.
emancipation when they met for the first time in 1897 at the suggestion of Key. Bergh favored independence, while Brandes was less committal. See Rapp (1978), p. 109.

6. **Symbolism**

1. See Carlson, pp. 34 and 181.
5. Quoted in Pierrot, p. 60.
7. Bergh (1908), “Det skönas problem från naturalistisk synpunkt,” p. 197. This essay was originally presented as a lecture to Uppsala University’s student association Verdandi in 1903.
9. Bergh (1908), “Treenighet,” p. 44. Bergh analyzed (and reproduced) Puvis’s *Sacred Grove* in this essay as an example of a unified work.
14. This letter is in the Bergh Archive of the Thielska Galleriet, Stockholm. Bergh was not an unqualified admirer of the Swiss painter, however. En route to Florence in 1897, he saw the Böcklin retrospective in Basel. In a letter he wrote to Pauli, 21 November 1897, on arriving in Florence, he reported that “four paintings were really wonderful, but the rest were hellishly damned, pretentious, raw, awkward, strained, and dilettantish beyond all description.” Pauli (1928), 1:125.
18. Quoted in Zachau, p. 156.
22. Quoted in Woolley, p. 16. French Symbolists were well aware of their roots in German Romanticism. See Jean Thorel, "Les Réformateurs allemands et les Symbolistes français," in Entretiens politiques et littéraires (Paris, 1891); excerpted in Michaud, pp. 760-61.
23. "Necken" was published in a collection of Josephson’s poetry, Guia rosor (Christiania [Oslo], 1896), p. 80.
25. The water lilies in Water Sprite are an unnatural touch, since they grow in still ponds, not near waterfalls, as Josephson depicts them.
27. Bergh (1908), "Måland Ernst Josephson," p. 72. In the same essay (p. 74), Bergh expresses his belief that Water Sprite would incite Swedish artists to abandon the "gray fogs" of Naturalism for stronger colors with independent decorative and symbolic significance. But just as Water Sprite initially failed to communicate effectively with its public, so too did Bergh’s Vision. When Vision was shown at the 1894 Artists’ Association exhibition in Stockholm, one reviewer admired Bergh’s approach to subject matter and acknowledged the painting’s appeal but was puzzled by the work: "How I wish to explain the conception behind Bergh’s Vision! But how can one clarify the inner association of numerous and unusual elements that give this painting its bizarre and initially almost confusing appeal? Strong and high-pitched tones rarely emerge from temperaments such as Richard Bergh’s." Edward Alkman, "Konstutställningarna: Konstnärsförbundet. I," Dagens Nyheter, 18 April 1894, n.p.
29. Lange, p. 145.
30. Ibid., p. 148.
35. Pauli (1928), 1:89.
36. Hedberg (1896), p. 188.
38. See Dorra, pp. 128-31.
40. Ibid., p. 100.
43. Ibid., p. 92.
44. Ibid.

7. SYNTHETISM IN THE VARBERG COLONY

2. Quoted in Pierrot, p. 23.
3. Pauli (1928), 1:43.
6. Quoted in Chipp, p. 94. Mauber (pp. 38-40) discusses this statement.
10. The synaesthetic tendency Nordström articulated was echoed in the writings of his colleagues. It coincided with the emergence of similar inclinations on the Continent, fueled, no doubt, by 1880s Wagnermania. Nordström’s musical family may also have helped him develop an affinity for music. His father was a music teacher, and Nordström himself played the violin. Both Bergh (in his 1892 essay "Intensitet och harmoni," "Om Konst och Annat," p. 65) and van Gogh (in an 1888 letter to his sister, quoted in Chipp, p. 31) make analogies between Wagnerian orchestration and visual harmony.
11. Almqvist, pp. 5-6.
12. Letter from Nordström to Bergh (as in n. 9).
13. The title in the 1893 exhibition catalogue translates as Landscape at Sunset.