National Renaissance and Nordic Resonance: Language History and Poetic Diction in Nineteenth-Century Sweden

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In nineteenth-century Sweden, the concept of the "voice of the past" was both literal and figurative. As in most other European countries, the turn of the century brought a national reawakening, as the cosmopolitan Enlightenment culture of the preceding Gustavian Age was devalued and the true roots of the national culture were sought, primarily in its Old Norse and medieval heritage. In the journal of the Gothic Union, a community of artists and intellectuals promoting interest in the Nordic past, the poet and historian Erik Gustaf Geijer wrote: "De lefvande minnena fästas i skrift, och Nationen beskådar tydligare sig sjelf i häfdernas spegel. […] Den ser sin dunkla början där Sagan står och väfver dess ätteledning från Guda-slägter; *den hör från vidt aflägsen forntid ett språk talas, hvars ljud den ännu igenkänner*" (5; emphasis mine).[1] The auditory metaphor seems to work on two levels: Old Norse was, literally, a familiar sound for the Swedes; at the same time, however, it means something less trivial, the "voice" in question being the testimony to a way of life and a mentality that supposedly unites the speakers of the original language with their modern-day descendants. Pronouncements such as these point to a particular idea of cultural resonance, according to which the sounds of the national language are connected to the essence of the national culture, and the memory of its past can be made to resound in modern creations. I will trace this idea in nineteenth-century Sweden, from its beginnings as a general trope in romanticism, through the effects of new scholarship on language history, to a philologically informed poetic style.

"The Language of Glory and Heroes"

This idea of cultural resonance is connected to "nationalism," "romanticism," and

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"historicism." These aspects, simultaneously vague and particular, can be integrated and given a more functional description if we turn to Alexander Beecroft's idea of the *national literary ecology* (195-241). What Beecroft terms ecologies are systems that allow literature to be produced and consumed, although they are different from systems modeled on economics in their more plural morphologies. The national literary ecology is not just a market in which literature can circulate, but also a particular way of structuring literary space and time. As a system, the national literary ecology treats the nation-state and its language as the primary unit of literature, in opposition to the premodern situation in which vernacular expression coexisted with cosmopolitan languages and literatures. In the case of Sweden, this means a clear difference from the preceding phase in which Latin and French were viable media of literary production. The national ecology not only redraws the map of literature along the borders of nations, but also reframes their past by the writing of literary history. As Beecroft points out, this device, "that at once legitimates a literature and the nation it embodies" (198), is an invention that is unique to the national ecology. One can thus speak of a synchronic and a diachronic aspect to this new literary system. It produces a particular feeling for linguistic and cultural difference in the present, while charging this difference with the knowledge of the past.

The best guide to the synchronic aspect of the Swedish national literary ecology is the poem "Språken" ("The Languages," 1817) by Esaias Tegnér, one of the leaders of the Gothicist movement and a dominant figure in Swedish poetry at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This seemingly playful poem consists of an inventory of the main literary languages of Europe, which are characterized and evaluated by the poet. What is interesting about the poem is how it conflates linguistic properties and national traits in a form of synesthesia, a technique demonstrated in how he characterizes Latin:

> Ren är din stämma och skarp som rasslet af härdade klingor,
> hårdt, som eröfraren höfs, ljuder ditt herrskareord.
> Stolt, oböjlig och arm; men ur grafven behärskar du ännu
> halfva Europa. Därpå känner man Romarn igen. (v. 5-8)

> Your voice is pure, as the rustle of hardened blades,
> your commanding word sounds out sharply, as befits a conqueror.
> Proud, inflexible, poor—yet from the grave you still command
> half of Europe. That way one recognizes the Roman!

The Latin language's phonetic properties ("pure," "hard"), its relative scarcity of vocabulary ("poor"), and its grammatical formalism ("inflexible"), are here associated with the military and organizational might of the Romans. Modern languages such as Danish, English, German, French, Spanish, and Italian are given a similar treatment. However, Tegnér's aim is not only to describe but also to prescribe. The catalogue of languages builds up to the final stanza, in which the poet treats his mother tongue, and epigrammatic wit yields to patriotic bombast:

Ärans och hjältarnas språk! Hur ädelt och manligt du rör dig,
ren är som malmens din klang, säker som solens din gång.
Vistas på höjderna du, der åskan och stormarna tala,
dalarnas lägre behag äro ej gjorda för dig.
Spegla ditt anlet i sjön, och friskt från de manliga dragen
tvätta det främmande smink, kanske det snart är för sent. (v. 31-36)

Language of glory and heroes! How nobly, how manly, you move.
Your sound is as pure as iron ore; your wandering is as assured as the sun's is.
Dwell on the heights, where storms and thunder rage;
the lower charms of the valleys are not meant for you.
Behold your face in the mirror of the lake, and wash away
from your manly features the foreign cosmetics; perhaps it will soon be too late.

In the context of the poem, Swedish belongs to the register of the sublime ("storms and thunder"), in accordance with the widespread association of sublimity with the North (Lönnroth 93-113). The use of the simile of iron ore to express the purity of the language may seem arbitrary, but is explained by the central importance of this resource in Swedish industry: the clear, open vowels of Swedish reflect its climate and natural surroundings. The "lower charms of the valleys" presumably refer to the Romance tongues, described elsewhere in the poem as charming, flattering, and playful. Here, as elsewhere in Tegnér's oeuvre, the North stands for "strength" while the South stands for "grace."[2] And never the twain should meet: when the poet admonishes his compatriots to "wash away […] the foreign cosmetics," he is referring to the many loanwords of French provenance that had entered the Swedish language in the eighteenth century. In this way, Tegnér's poem functions as both a guide to the new phenomenology of linguistic and cultural differences, and a manifesto for the national language. It set the tone for many expressions of cultural nationalism throughout the century, which often quoted the phrase "foreign cosmetics" directly from Tegnér (e.g. Rydberg, 19 Dec. 1871; Warburg, "Om folkskalder").[3]

A national literary ecology can seem like a narrowing of a past often marked by multilingual literary production. Yet this tightening of the bond between nation, language, and literature is compensated by a very generous historical view of each of these terms, in which past state-formations, as well as languages (or states of language) and textual genres (often promoted from utilitarian to aesthetic objects), are reinterpreted as links in a chain leading to the national literary present. The remarkable thing is, perhaps, not the strictures against multilingualism, but rather this faith in the continuity of a national essence as expressed through language. In 1822, the architect and classicist Carl Georg Brunius published *De diis arctois*, an attempt to transpose the mythology of the Old Norse *Edda* into a polished Neo-Latin poem. Unsurprisingly, the critic of the romantic journal *Swensk Litteratur-Tidning* thought this choice of language and style deeply unfitting. If a modern Swede reads the Edda in the original or in the Swedish translation "så ilar genom sinnet […] en viss helig rysning, och en kraftig hemkänsla väcks" (150).[4] This effect is said to disappear completely if the content is translated into a non-Scandinavian language. This easy

equivalence between two very different languages in opposition to a "foreign" one such as Latin is explained by Old Norse and Swedish being seen as products of the same culture. The spirit of the people is said to have expressed itself in customs and religious belief, and given the language a corresponding character, which "med särskildta modificationer också bibehållit sig i dess yngre afledningar" (149).[5] Old Norse is appropriated and turned into a usable past for modern Swedish literature.

This relation between an old vernacular and a modern national literature is, of course, not unique to Sweden. Newly discovered "national epics" such as the *Chanson de Roland* or *Beowulf* were not written in the same languages that their editors spoke, but rather in their prototypes. Yet the unintelligibility of many of these works to modern readers posed surprisingly few obstacles when it came to turning them into a living heritage. For a theorist of nationalism such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, a people could be defined as "those men whose speech organs are subjected to the same external influences" (50). A language could change considerably while still remaining fundamentally the same:

> Though after several centuries the descendants may not understand the language of their forebears, because the transitions have been lost to them, yet there is from the beginning a continuous transition without leaps, which, always imperceptible at the time and only made perceptible by the accretion of new transitions, does indeed seem to proceed by leaps and bounds. Never has there been a time when contemporaries might have ceased to understand one another, because their eternal mediator and interpreter was and remained the common force of nature that spoke through them all. (50-51)

A perspective like this has a powerfully relativizing effect on what we take to be differences between two states of the same language (e.g. Old French and Modern French, or Old Swedish and Modern Swedish), or even different languages altogether (e.g. Latin and French, or Old Norse and Swedish). In this equation, ethnicity trumps language change. No living Swede can read an Old Swedish text without philological preparation—*a fortiori*, a text written in Old Norse. Yet, in both cases the acoustic side of language provides a sense of recognition and sensuous evidence of kinship: Danish scholar Niels Mathias Petersen said of the relationship between Old Norse and the modern Scandinavian languages, that "[h]vartsomhelst vi än begifva oss i de tre nordiska rikena, ljuder beviset ännu alltjemt i våra öron" (8).[6]

To summarize, the national literary ecology offered a tradeoff, wherein the relative narrowness of the language choice was compensated by historical depth. The statements discussed above belong chiefly to the agents who effectuated the change to such a system. Their national jingoism and romantic metaphysics were eventually downplayed, but it was henceforth taken for granted that a Swedish work of literature was to be written in the national tongue, and that it forms a link in the historical evolution of the speech community. What changed throughout the century concerned the knowledge of the national language itself. For the Gothicist generation, the national language of Sweden in itself resounded with its Old Norse heritage, and the opposition to foreign influence mainly concerned easily detected French loanwords.

However, with the new attention to language history, linguistic resonance became at once a more precisely defined goal, and more difficult to achieve.

The Laws of Swedish

The rise of Gothicism in Swedish literature is intimately connected to a revolution in the domain of language research. The Danish philologist Rasmus Rask had been called in to help the Swedish Gothicists with the editing of Icelandic manuscripts (Stenroth). Travelling further to Iceland, he wrote a study that demonstrated the kinship of Slavic and Germanic languages and described the First Germanic Sound Shift, a key discovery in the development of linguistics. Rask published his findings too late, and passed away too early, to assume the leading role for which he seemed destined; instead, German scholars took the lead. Franz Bopp launched comparative grammar as a science, showing the systematic relationship among Indo-European languages. Jakob Grimm established the model for historical linguistics: his *Deutsche Grammatik* (first volume 1818) was the first attempt to account systematically for the history of a language as observed in its morphological, semantic, and phonological changes. The latter was especially important. Although historians of linguistics argue whether the "letters" studied by Rask and Grimm meet the demands of phonology as subsequently codified, this attention to the historical dimension of speech sounds was an important innovation (Morpurgo Davies 128, 143-44; Murray 14-15). Grimm did not go as far as Bopp and other comparatists, for whom the national was dissolved in the Indo-European. Instead, he halted at the limit of what he perceived as a people, the Germans. This undertaking would give rise to many counterparts that gave similar treatment to the Romance, Slavic, or Scandinavian languages. Language —the particular language of a community—had now become an object with its own substance and evolution across time, the permanent elements of which were to be sought in its grammatical structures and the sounds produced by speech.

The first Swedish scholar to employ this method was Johan Erik Rydqvist (1800-77), who in *Svenska språkets lagar* (*The Laws of Swedish*, published in six volumes beginning in 1850) tried to do for Swedish what Grimm had done with his *Deutsche Grammatik*. Like Grimm, Rydqvist thought that the essence of a particular language must be sought in its history, and that logical or prescriptive views of language were inadequate. Rydqvist considered the task of historical language research not only to interpret the past, but also to "uppställa språkets genomgående lagar: visa […] hvad deruti är ren och naturenlig utveckling eller missbildning" (7).[7] The norms of correctness would be deduced from the language's organic tendencies, as opposed to changes that lacked inner grammatical or phonological motives. For example, Rydqvist pointed out that the Swedish word "närvaro" ("presence") is really an inflected form of the original word "närvara": in expressions such as "i min närvaro" ("in my presence"), a dative inflection had taken the role of the nominative

(29). Rydqvist also sought to preserve the structural feature of strong verbs with ablaut, which were constantly threatened by assimilation into the regularities that governed the weak ones. His method was philological: he used the recently published Old Swedish writings of the Middle Ages to demonstrate the original tendencies of the language, from which it should not be allowed to stray too far. As a member of the Swedish Academy and as editor of its list of Swedish orthography, Rydqvist was not without influence. In the preceding phase, the Academy's work on Swedish grammar and orthography had been governed by Enlightenment philosophy of language and a socially elitist view of "good usage"; with Rydqvist, the historical perspective grew in importance (Loman 101-08; Ralph).

Although Rydqvist's work was focused on Swedish specifically, he viewed the language in a greater Nordic perspective. Scholars such as Rask and his follower Niels Matthias Petersen were convinced that there had once existed a unified Nordic tongue, which was conserved in near-pristine form in Iceland, while later developments led to the branching out of Swedish and Danish (Petersen 8-10). Rydqvist sought the essence of Swedish in written records from the fourteenth century, assuming that this earlier phase was in accordance with purely Nordic habits. It should also be noted that the organicist view of comparative philology regarded language as in a state of decay, passing from highly inflected languages to the dissolution of case systems by the use of prepositions (cf. Grimm). This view could be applied to the relation between Old Norse and Swedish, as well as between Old and Modern Swedish. Both cases demonstrated a clear trend towards simplification.

During the same period a Swedish dialectology also emerged, first the product of isolated enthusiasts and amateur word collectors, but soon a professionalized endeavour. This work had important ramifications for the understanding of the Swedish national language and its relation to neighbouring ones. Rasmus Rask (XX) had already stressed that the Swedish dialects preserved remnants of Old Norse, and this view was not uncommon later in the century (cf. Rietz III). It was often coupled with a negative view of foreign influence: the geographically most isolated dialects were seen as examples of Swedish in its more natural state, while the language of the cities had been exposed to contact with other peoples, especially the Germans (Sellberg 18-20). When dialectological research grew into a program, the goal was not just to find variations in the national language but also to come closer to its true sources. As Rydqvist put it, the dialects formed a "living supplement" (51) to the written record of the past.

Such linguistic scholarship also had effects on the development of national literature. From one point of view, the language choice for a national literature is an issue that is quickly settled. With the shift to a national ecology of literature, the national language becomes the systemically privileged vehicle of literary expression, to the detriment of minority languages and with the obliteration of the cosmopolitan literary heritage, such as works written in Latin, as a typical side effect (Beecroft 198). However, it does not stop there. With increasing awareness of language his-

tory, the demand for vernacular expression reappears within the national language itself. If national languages are always, to some extent, mixed, and bear witness to cultural exchange, some aspects of them are seen as more national than others. It is, for example, well documented how the Anglo-Saxon—often misnamed Old English—substrate became a token of Englishness in nineteenth-century poetry (see Jones). In the Swedish context, its strictly Nordic roots were similarly perceived as the truly national within the national language. The same cultural ambitions that had once made the nation-state the primary unit for literature reappears on a much smaller scale as a question of style: choice of language becomes choice of words.

As Mark-Georg Dehrmann and Alexander Nebrig point out, the nineteenth century witnessed a new role for the poet as not simply a *poeta doctus*, skilled in the universal rules of rhetoric and imitation of cosmopolitan models, but as a *poeta philologus* aware of the diachronic growth of his/her own culture. In the latter case, the poet combines two roles or modes of thought that are rife with tensions: where philology demonstrates the historical evolution of language and literature, poetry stresses originality and subjectivity in the present. The works of the poet could, in due time, become the object of the philologist, but what is learned in philology cannot be simply transposed to the domain of poetry (Nebrig and Dehrmann 9-11). More precisely, to the extent that this knowledge *is* put to use in a work of art, it seems to imply an attitude to both the past and the future of a national tradition: rupture, continuity, reinvention, and so forth. This recursive tendency is easily observed in the attempts to resuscitate folkloric forms such as the ballad, or in the thematic use of national legends, but it can also affect the most fundamental tool of the poet: the national language. With the new awareness of language history, the possibilities of putting the present in touch with the past increase, as do the demands on purism, which can no longer be satisfied with bland generalities about "the language of glory and heroes."

A Purist Campaign

In 1873, the author and journalist Viktor Rydberg (1828-1895) published the article "German or Nordic Swedish?", a thorough critique of a Bible translation. He stressed the difference between two types of foreign interference in the Swedish language: where loanwords from the Romance languages immediately signaled their difference, the German ones were more dangerous, as they more easily blended in and camouflaged their foreignness. The massive German influence on Swedish since the Middle Ages had led to the adaptation not only of German words but also of patterns for word formation, especially with the prefixes *an-, be-, ge-*: "Många skriftställare tro sig adla ett svenskt ord, genom att ställa ett *be* framför det, såsom plebejiska namn adlas genom *von*" (Rydberg, "Tysk eller nordisk svenska?" 330).[8] In this, as in many other details, Rydberg looked to the Swedish dialects as a potential corrective. In a

newspaper article written at the same time, he stresses that these prefixes are not used in those regions "der språket häfdat sin ursprunglighet" (Rydberg, 30 Oct. 1872).[9] Similarly, the dialects had conserved the gendered distinction of inanimate nouns that were about to disappear. The dialects were in accord with Old Norse habits, and in this respect, they differed as little from each other as they differed from the *Edda* or the Old Swedish law-texts ("Tysk eller nordisk svenska?" 361, quoting Rydqvist 50). With Rydberg, the historical view formed a program of linguistic purism, delivered with considerable polemical force.

Behind this was a politics of affiliation. Rydberg's attempt at language reform is clearly in line with the second wave of the Scandinavist movement and its goal to promote the unity of the Northern peoples. He pointed to similar ambitions in Norway as an inspiration ("Tysk eller nordisk svenska?" 330; "Om Målsträfvet"), though domestic politics was equally important to him. During his brief stint as a member of parliament, Rydberg had developed closer ties to the rural party. He had long been propagating for a conscription-based reform of the Swedish army, and that the peasant class should form its backbone ("Hvar äro trälarne?"). He also gave voice to the national narrative of the Swedish peasant's proud traditions of liberty and political participation. According to this view, Old Swedish society had originally been a form of "rural democracy," and even in later ages, the feudal system was never complete. In a text written in the same year as "German or Nordic Swedish?", he saw a clear connection between political history and language history:

> Den från urtiden räckande gyllene kedjan af frie själfägande bondemän har aldrig i Sverige varit bruten […]. En tyst, men hård och stundom förtviflad kamp har den nordiske anden under denna tid måst fortföra mot de utländska, på ofrihet grundade föreställningssätt, som oupphörligen inträngt och sökt göra sig gällande inom våra landamären. I samma kamp har äfven det svenska språket varit ingripet och är det ännu. Ur bondens stuga har det hämtat sin motståndskraft, medan skolan intill denna dag omedvetet gjort allt för att kväfva den svenska språkkänslan under bördan af minnesläxor ur främmande tungomål, och medan de s.k. bildade klasserna lidit af en, man kan säga hardt när till brist på själfaktning gränsande åhåga för det utländska än i tysk, än i fransk, ombonad. ("Huru kan Sverige" 371)[10]

Rydberg's purism had a clear political aim: it would foster feelings of kinship with the other Nordic peoples and strengthen the autonomy of Sweden. He insisted that an independent language is closely connected to independence in mentality and political sovereignty (14 Feb. 1872).

As a journalist writing for the liberal *Göteborgs Handels-och Sjöfartstidning*, Rydberg stressed that the preference for Nordic words over imported ones would make writing more easily accessible to the masses. This was also the approach taken by S.A. Hedlund, the newspaper's chief editor (Warburg, *Viktor Rydberg* 315). Whether it had the desired effect is doubtful, and it is also uncertain whether accessibility was Rydberg's primary concern. While opposing German loanwords, he had learned the lesson of comparative philology well enough to locate the essence of a

language in its deeper structures—in its morphology, and not least in its phonology ("Tysk eller nordisk svenska?" 355). The problem for Rydberg was, rather, that once loanwords were imported, their influence would soon spread to morphology and eventually dissolve the basic structures of grammar and sound, the "laws" of Swedish. By importing words, "de rika medel till ordbildning språket i sig själf äger lämnas å sido. Men muskler, som man aldrig spänner, slappas och och varda odugliga till tjänst" ("Tysk eller nordisk svenska?" 370).[11] What Rydberg aimed for was not so much a pure lexicon, or a popular and easily understood Swedish, as the preservation of the basic habits of grammar and speech that to him constituted Nordicness. In another context, he pointed out that a language deserves to be loved not only as an instrument of thought, but as "den egne folkstammens alster och den egne folkandens kännetecken" ("Om målsträfvet").[12]

Rydberg's attempt to reform the standard Swedish language represents an interesting point in the development of linguistics, when the advances in historical research still seemed to offer guidelines to the true essence of the language. This would soon change, as the polemic sparked by his "Nordic or German Swedish?" led to some of the earliest statements of the emerging Neogrammarian school in Sweden.[13] The linguist Esaias Tegnér Jr., grandson of the aforementioned poet, responded in the same journal with his reflections on "Språk och nationalitet" ("Language and Nationality"). By pointing to the fact of multilingualism in many countries, he stressed the relative independence of political, ethnic, and linguistic nationality, and in opposition to Rydberg's nationalism, he could see many advantages in a world-language (Tegnér, "Om språk och nationalitet" 102-03, 123-27). For Tegnér, language was merely a tool for communication, and the task of the linguist was to describe actual usage, not to try to correct it (141-42). Language change could not be divided into "organic" developments and the result of simple carelessness or ignorance: all changes were the result of the speakers' wish to make communication easier (105-06). Furthermore, Tegnér and his colleague Adolf Noreen considered the norms of the historical school arbitrary: if the original "laws" of Swedish were found in the Middle Ages, that was merely because the written record began there (Noreen 151). They would abandon this philological bias and turn their attention to daily communication, arguably inaugurating linguistics in Sweden as a field of study distinct from the study of texts and literature.[14] Although Rydberg was initially skeptical of the new linguists' instrumental view of language, he would eventually admit defeat, and in his writings of the 1880s and 1890s, he softened his purism considerably (Holm 34-38). From that point, scholarly consensus would view language less as a historical organism than as a practical structure dependent on its myriad everyday uses, with functionality as the main criterion of correctness.

Viktor Rydberg as *Poeta Philologus*

Viktor Rydberg could hardly be called victorious in his quixotic quest to reform the standard language, though his vision of a Swedish language that maintained contact with its ancestors would have some success in a more circumscribed domain. In 1882, he emerged as the leading poet of his time, making his belated debut with a collection simply entitled *Dikter* (*Poems*), though his poetry was already known and had been in part previously published in magazines. The collection as a whole can be described as stylistically and generically heterogeneous, although a large portion of it is clearly marked by the language debate of the 1870s. It is telling that this new phase of poetic creation was set off by his translation of the poem "Vaknen!" ("Awaken!") by the Norwegian poet Olaf Viig, which exhorts the Scandinavian peoples to rise from their slumber and manifest their cultural independence. The poem contains a perfect formulation of the idea of a Nordic linguistic-cultural resonance:

Frejas suck och svärdens stålklang Ljuda än i modersmålet. (v. 31-32)	The sigh of Freja[15] and the steely clangour of swords still resound in the mother tongue.

Although this poem seems like just another Scandinavist slogan of a kind common in both Swedish and Norwegian poetry of the time, in the context of the collection it also functions as a manifesto of one of Rydberg's central ambitions. Influenced by his intense studies in Swedish language history, Rydberg had clearly become a philological poet, for whom no word choice was innocent. In the 1870s he made lists of thousands of words from his reading of Old Norse and Old Swedish sources as well as dialectological research, all of which fed into his practice as a poet (Holm 22).

Many of Rydberg's other poems bear more implicit witness to his attempts to reawaken the true Nordic language. One such example is the first stanza of his oft-anthologized poem "Skogsrået" ("The Wood-Siren," first published in 1876):

Han, Björn, var en stark och fager sven	Now Björn was a strong and handsome lad
med breda väldiga skuldror	With shoulders and arms like iron
och smärtare midja än andre män—	And a waist more slender than others had—
slikt retar de snöda huldror.	Such rouse the lust of the siren.
Till gille han gick en höstlig qväll,	He went to a feast one autumn night
då månen sken öfver gran och häll,	When moonlight poured over boughs so bright
och vinden drog	And the dark wind's breath
med hi och ho	With hi and ho
öfver myr och skog,	Drew over the heath
genom hult och mo;	In the haunted glow,
då var honom trolskt i hågen,	And so by magic was taken.
han ser åt skogen och har ej ro,	He scans the heavens—the woods below—
han skådar åt himlabågen,	He feels uneasy and shaken.
men träna de vinka och nicka,	But the trees they are waving and whining
och stjärnorna blinka och blicka:	And the stars they are blinking and shining
gå in, gå in, gå in i hvinande furumo!	Go in, go in, go into the whiney piney-woods, go!

(v. 1-16; translation in Moffett 93)

The language is in harmony with the folkloric flavour of the poem, but the word choices go well beyond the requirements of atmosphere. First, almost all of the words are of ancient Swedish stock, and several of them ("fager," "sven," "snöda," "huldror," "gille," "hågen") are clear archaisms. The line "då var honom trolskt i hågen" contains an interesting grammatical deviation. In a construction like this, the auxiliary verb "var" usually describes a past state of being ("was"), yet Rydberg seems to use it here with the ingressive sense of "blev" ("became"). This usage is rare, and in Rydberg's case it seems historically motivated, since the word "bli" is based on a German loan he found problematic (Rydberg 352; 30 Oct. 1872). The plural definite "träna" (the trees, "träden" in normal usage) is also significant, as J.E. Rydqvist had demonstrated that the original form for "träd" (tree) was "trä" (Holm 89). This seemingly naïve poem is a result of Rydberg's studies in language history.

Even though the stanza resembles a lipogram, in which words and forms that are not of ancient Nordic provenance are avoided as much as possible, it does not seem forced but instead derives its effects from that very distance from standard Swedish, which gives lines such as "slikt retar de snöda huldror" their spell-like musicality. It calls to mind Jan Mukařovský's description of the relation between standard language and poetic language as a relationship between automatization and foregrounding, which is brought to the reader's attention by the violation of the norm. It is important to note that the use of non-standard language does not necessarily foreground the word choices as such; rather, the effect depends on the particular relationship between the poem's components, not least "the relationship of the word as a meaningful unit to the phonetic structure of the text" (45). In this relatively fast-paced poem, in which rhythmic liberties are balanced by the interlocking rhyme scheme and the forward push of the narrative, the archaic word choices do not stand out, but find their place in a structure whose minimal unit is the line of verse. If the poem can be seen as a part of Rydberg's campaign for language reform, it seems to be aimed more at cultivating the sounds of Swedish than at particular interventions in the lexicon. As Rydberg pointed out in his manifesto for a Nordic Swedish, "I orden som klang yppar sig folkstammens medfödda sinne för ljud och tidsmått" ("Tysk eller nordisk svenska?" 356).[16] In this case, the history of the language resounds in the form of mood and texture.

The Uses of Archaism

Eastern European literary theory of the first half of the twentieth century has provided us a relational understanding of poetic language, which, moreover, accords a key role to the diachronic dimension of language (see Jakobson and Tynjanov). As Mukařovský points out, poetic language cannot be seen as a particular branch of the

standard language, "if for no other reason that poetic language has as its disposal, from the standpoint of lexicon, syntax, etc., all the forms of a given language—*often of different developmental phases thereof*" (42; emphasis mine). If poetic effect consists in defamiliarization, past states of language become an important resource for the poet. An apprehension of this problem can be found in the debates that followed Rydberg's polemic. In the specific case of poetic diction, Rydberg's earlier opponent, the linguist Esaias Tegnér Jr., allowed for a fundamental anachronism of language. In his entry speech into the Swedish Academy in 1882 on the topic of "The Language of Poetry," Tegnér pointed out that poetry could make use of the very old as well as the very recent in the service of artistic innovation. The new word that has not yet been accepted and the old that is about to be forgotten, are united by their opposition to the everyday and the trivial (Tegnér, "Poesiens språk" 253). This rudimentary poetics of defamiliarization would be further developed by the philosopher Hans Larsson in his 1899 work *Poesins logik* (*The Logic of Poetry*). The use of archaism had a further advantage, according to Tegnér: the "more noble sonority" of old-fashioned words was in his view reinforced by the fact that "[d]en ädlare klang som alltså ord med ålderdomligt tycke i många fall visa sig äga förstärkes i viss mån därigenom att dessa ord lätt till resonansbotten erhålla en så kraftigt genljudande känsla som kärleken till hembygd och fosterland" (247).[17] Tegnér regarded this as the rationale behind the introduction of old Nordic words into Swedish poetry. In this, it is not difficult to see a partial concession to the views of Viktor Rydberg, who, as a member of the Academy, was present when the speech was delivered. Rydberg's polemic and his practice as a poet may well have inspired a sharpened attention to the differences between poetic and ordinary language, and this theoretical motivation of stylistic archaism.

The imprecise notion of "poetical language," largely inherited from an earlier classicist phase, with its division of styles according to the dignity of the subject matter, could now be historicized. For example, the word "änne" (forehead) was widely understood as a poeticism for the more common "panna." The word also fits perfectly the kind of restorative poetic diction that Rydberg favoured. It is archaic: the more common word "panna" is a later addition based on the compound "huvud-panna" (literally "head-pan"); in Icelandic, the cognate "enni" refers to the body part, while a "panna" is the cooking utensil. The word "änne" has also continued to exist as the unmarked variety in some Finno-Swedish dialects. As such, it was taken up in Rietz's pioneering dialect lexicon, a source of which Rydberg made extensive use. Therefore, it has a natural place in his heavily Old Norse-influenced poem "Baldersbålet" ("The Pyre of Balder"):

Oden fattar facklan;	Odin grasps the torch-hilt;
ännet, skumt af sorger,	furrowed deep, his forehead
sänkes mot hans bröst.	Towards his bosom bows.

(v. 15-17; translation in Moffet 97)

This sombre poem, written in a version of Old Norse alliterative verse, calls for the more dignified "änne." But this example, which both formally and thematically reveals its Nordicness, only lays bare a principle that informs Rydberg's practice in many other poems: the choice of words allows modern Swedish to resound with its past.

Such non-synchronicity of poetic language also affects a central issue in the linguists' opposition to Rydberg's language reform, namely the limits that separate languages, or historical phases of one and the same language. Adolf Noreen pointed out that it was "in general […] absurd to look for the norms of anything outside of itself" (148), yet this was clearly the case when one looked for the norms of New Swedish in Old Swedish. These constituted for Noreen two different languages, "as sure as Latin is a different language than its daughter, French" (198). This was far from self-evident. Noreen's contemporary Gaston Paris wanted to stress the unity of French and Latin, as well as the unity of standard French and its dialects, and denied that the successive states of Latin and French could be separated more easily than the local variations of the latter: "Il n'y a pas de langues mères et de langues filles" (437).[18] The Swedish scholar Gustaf Cederschiöld had a similar view of the successive states of Swedish (4-5). In general, Neogrammarians of Noreen's kind were averse to hypostasizing language as a metaphysical or evolutionary entity, and they tended to locate it to a psychological plane (Haapamäki, "Leipzig tur och retur" 7). Where the older school of historical language research was interested in continuity, the focus on daily communication led the new linguists to a sharp separation between the grammar of present-day language and the parts that belonged to *historical* grammar (Haapamäki, *Studier i svensk grammatikhistoria* 230-33). In this perspective, a practical criterion of what constitutes a language can be sought in the mutual understanding of its speakers. Although this makes sense when discussing the reform of the standard language, it does not account for poetic language, in which the textual bias and cult of origins that lay at the heart of nineteenth-century philology could be given free rein. In poetic creations, writers such as Rydberg could resurrect old words for their historical connotations or their noble sonority, regardless of any divisions between Old Swedish and Modern Swedish, or between Swedish and Old Norse.

Resonance: Some Fading Echoes

The functionalist dogma of the new linguists has sometimes been seen as contradictory (Gierow 94). They were advocating simplifications of the standard language, often looking to cultivated spoken language as a norm for further development, while at the same time adhering to the classical point of view, which saw "good authors" as the primary models for the written language (Noreen 209-10). This contradiction was exacerbated by new fashions that led to a further distance between the literary language and the standard spoken language. The 1890s saw a romantic national

revival in opposition to the social realism that had dominated the previous decade. The influential authors of the day developed a literary language inspired by fantastic images of Swedish history and by the rural culture of particular regions, making liberal use of archaisms and regional expressions, a practice that reached a new height in the poems of Erik Axel Karlfeldt (1864-1931).

Karlfeldt did not appear to hold a linguistic-political worldview of Rydberg's kind, but rather displayed a general cultural conservatism and a traditional view of Dalecarlia as the country's heart, the region from where the struggle for national independence had begun. However, he did receive philological training in university, and his work is marked by a keen awareness of language history and sociolinguistic differences. He created a poetic alter ego, a poet of peasant stock named Fridolin, who, in a phrase that has since become proverbial, was known to converse "with peasants in peasant's way, and with learned men in Latin." Karlfeldt's literary models called back to the baroque poetry of the seventeenth century, and in his portrait of his idol and fellow Dalecarlian, Georg Stiernhielm (1598-1672), we may glimpse some of his views on poetry and language: "Svenskan, som blivit kallad 'ärans och hjältarnas språk,' är numera feg och ofruktsam. Men Stiernhielm var med i dess skapelsedagar, och han skapade med liv och lust. Han låter gamla ord, vardagsord och allmogeord efter behov stiga in i sin poesi" (144).[19] Karlfeldt's practice consisted of a similar eclecticism, rather than the purism associated with Rydberg. He did not attempt to understand or return to "the laws of Swedish," but he went on a prowl for archaic and dialectal words that gave his poems their local colour and sonority.[20] This perhaps accounts for why his poems were simultaneously very popular and, at least in their details, quite obscure.

Karlfeldt's is probably the last serious attempt to systematically explore the resources of older states of the Swedish language in the service of a nationalist ideology. After his time, the period of "national historicism," which in Swedish literature stretches from the Romantic era to well after the First World War, gave way to the more individualistic and pluralistic strategies of modernism. This is not to say, however, that later poets no longer use archaic words for their sonorous or evocative qualities. Katarina Frostenson, one of the most prominent Swedish poets of later decades, reintroduces forgotten words in her work by digging out their etymological core or looking for a secondary meaning in their phonetic or typographical shape. Yet this practice is underpinned by a vaguely poststructuralist view of the subject's relation to the given language, rather than a commitment to an idealized Nordic past or rural identity.

The strong form of linguistic resonance discussed in this article depends on a particular conjunction of cultural nationalism, an organicist phase in the development of modern linguistics, and an undertheorized distinction between standard language and poetic language. As such, it belongs squarely to the nineteenth-century context. Still, one should not preclude the possibility that a similar dynamic reoccurs in the stylistic strategies of individual writers, or more broadly as tendencies in the vocabu-

lary of poetry. The idea of linguistic resonance was an effect of a particular systemic shift in the relation between literatures: the consolidation of the nation, its culture, and its language, as the natural unit of literature. This also means that it could reappear in the present state of literature, which seems split between a still functional system of national literatures and the opportunities of a new global market. If the latter appears too homogenizing, it is hardly inconceivable that writers will resort to techniques that more firmly anchor their project in a national linguistic community. Whether they will be aware of it or not, they will in practice reconnect to what was once a full-fledged program for resurrecting the "Nordic spirit."

Notes

1. "Living memories are committed to writing, and the nation sees itself clearer in the mirror of history. […] It sees its obscure origin, where the saga stands, spinning its pedigree from the gods; *it hears a voice from the distant past, whose sounds it still recognizes as its own*." This translation, like all the unattributed ones in the following, is my own.

2. The Danish language, for example, is deemed "too weak for the Nordic strength/ yet for the grace of the South much too Nordic" ("För veklig för nordiska styrkan/ Även för söderns behag mycket för nordisk ännu").

3. It should be noted in passing that this phrase itself is a play on a Latin trope (see the "persicos […] apparatus" of Horace, *Odes* I. 38 and the "peregrinibus […] muneribus" of Propertius I. 2).

4. "traversed by a holy shudder, and a powerful longing for home is awakened."

5. "with special modifications has maintained itself in its younger descendants."

6. "Wherever we go in the three Nordic realms, the proof still sounds in our ears."

7. "establish the consistent laws of language, to show […] what in it belongs to a pure and natural development, and what is a malformation."

8. "many a writer thinks that he ennobles a Swedish word, by adding a *be* before it, much in the same way as plebeian names are ennobled by adding a *von*."

9. "where the language has maintained its original form."

10. "The golden chain of free, independent farmers, stretching back to ancient times, has never been broken in Sweden […]. The Nordic spirit has been forced to engage in a quiet, yet hard and sometimes desperate struggle against the foreign ideas based on serfdom which have ceaselessly penetrated our land and tried to dominate. The Swedish language has been, and still is, engaged in the same combat. It has gotten its force of resistance from the peasant's hut, while the school system unconsciously has done all within its might to smother the Swedish feeling for language under the burden of rote learning from the foreign tongues, and while the so-called educated classes suffered from a lust, bordering on lack of self-esteem, for whatever is foreign, be it in German or in French attire."

11. "the rich means of word formation that the language has in itself will be laid aside. But muscles that are never used will become weak and wither."

12. "the creation of the people, and the signature of the national spirit."

13. For a good summary, see Haapamäki, "Leipzig tur och retur." Like her, I use the term "Neogrammarian" in a somewhat generalizing manner. At first, the Swedish scholars were inspired by William

Dwight Whitney and the reflections of the Danish classical philologist Johan Nicolai Madvig. Slightly later, the German Neogrammarians ("die Junggrammatiker") formed a coherent movement based on similar principles, and the Swedish linguists followed them closely, albeit not always uncritically.

14. The terms *filologi* (philology) and *lingvistik* (linguistics) are somewhat unclear in nineteenth-century Swedish, as is their relation to the broader term språkvetenskap (scholarship on language). Towards the end of the century, Axel Kock, a scholar of the same generation as Tegnér and Noreen, defined linguistics according to its interest in language as such, including spoken language and uncultured language, in opposition to the focus on texts as cultural-historical documents typical of philology (Kock 2-4).

15. The Nordic goddess of love and sexuality.

16. "In the sonority of the words, the people's native sense of sound and measure reveals itself."

17. "these words have as a soundboard such a powerfully resounding feeling as that of love for one's native region and fatherland."

18. "there are no mother-languages and daughter-languages."

19. "Swedish, which has been called 'the language of glory and heroes,' is nowadays timid and infertile. But Stiernhielm was active in the creative phase of the language, and he created with joy. He let old words, common words and the words of the people enter his poems when needed."

20. On his archaisms, see Mjöberg 192-213.

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