

Michael Roberts

## Geijer and England<sup>1</sup>

In 1947 Sweden commemorated the centenary of the death of Erik Gustaf Geijer. The occasion produced the usual outbreak of appreciative articles, much lapidary oratory, and an unprepossessing green postage stamp. Non-Scandinavian humanity, it appears, took these manifestations with indifference: a philatelist here, a historian there, may perhaps have felt a momentary stirring of interest; but to mankind at large Geijer remained a name of no significance. As occasionally happens, mankind at large was wrong. For Geijer — make no mistake about it — Geijer was a great man. Had he been born the fellow-countryman of Guizot or Macaulay all the world would remember his centenary — or at least, all that donnish world which was Geijer's special milieu. Today he stands, four-square and solid on his granite plinth, at the very heart of the University of Uppsala, gravely contemplating the Historical Institution of that University. It is not easy to define in what his greatness consisted. Philosopher, historian, poet, musician, politician, publicist, don — he was all these things; and in some of them he has a title to greatness, at all events among his own people. The diversity of his talents was such that it is an agreeable fancy to conjecture that his constant reading of *The Edinburgh Review* may have infected him with a Broughamish omniscience. But really his greatness lay not in the remarkable cumulation of so many reputations, but in the character of the man himself, and the impact of his personality upon his contemporaries: an impact so powerful that men feel it still.

If there was one country outside Scandinavia in which his centenary might perhaps have stirred an echo, that country was England. For it was to England that Geijer devoted some of the most attractive pages of his *Memoirs*: and it was from England that he drew intellectual stimuli that more than once had an important effect upon his development. He was born in 1783, and when he came to England he was twenty-six: it was his first trip abroad. His boyhood had been spent at Ransäter, in the province of Värmland, where his forbears had long been profitably engaged in the iron industry, and had provided an example of the saying that "iron opens up the country". The society in which he grew up will be familiar to all readers of Selma Lagerlöf's novel, *Gösta Berlings Saga*: substantial ironmasters, living comfortably as country gentlemen in their long, low, single-storied houses, on close social terms with the half-pay

or pensioned officers of the neighbourhood; contriving their own diversions; blending plain living with a surprising degree of cultural awareness: this *was* the Värmland of *Gösta Berlings Saga*. Above all, it was a land of music. In the isolated manor-houses and ironworks men cultivated music with an almost Elizabethan naturalness; and if the quartets of Beethoven had not yet reached them, at least they were on good terms with Haydn, and worshipped the divine Mozart. Geijer himself was a good pianist — he considered a piano to be a necessity of life — and quite early he tried his hand at composition. In his *Memoirs* he has left a charming and tender picture of his native province, and throughout his life he hankered to return to the old house at Ransäter.

But all too soon he was forced to exchange the lakes and forests of Värmland for the windy plains of Uppsala, and the blaze and sparkle of forge and foundry for the crackle of academic controversy. Not that he gave much hint, at first, that he had any chance of intellectual distinction. As an undergraduate he frittered away his time on desultory reading. He shirked his Disputation for the degree of Magister, when the time came for it. He wrote sentimental and priggish letters to his family, and impertinently criticised the dons. From this unsatisfactory condition he was rescued by a feat which considerably astonished his relations. Without confiding his intention to anybody he put in an essay in competition for the annual gold medal awarded by the Swedish Academy; and he won it. For a youth of twenty this was a remarkable achievement. It made him at once a personage in the literary world. It helped to restore his self-respect. And it may have determined his subsequent career; for the subject proposed for that year had been historical, and Geijer now decided that if he could not be anything better, at least he might be an historian. This was perhaps a rash conclusion, for the essay had been no more than a *réchauffé* of a single secondary authority, and had secured the award more as a piece of prose than as a contribution to learning. However, his object now became a docentship at Uppsala, either in classics or in history (he did not greatly care which); and with a view to improving his prospects he wrote a thesis on Roman historiography, thus anticipating the technique of Mr Pott's celebrated article on Chinese metaphysics.<sup>2</sup> The docentship, however, tarried unaccountably, and the would-be historian consoled himself by diving into the profundities of Schlegel, relaxing only to make love to the daughter of one of his neighbours in Värmland.

Thus brought to a dead stop, and chafing now with the consciousness of ability denied a vent, he decided that what he really needed was *travel*. After some trouble he got himself attached as tutor-companion to a young man of delicate constitution who was to go abroad in search of milder air. Accordingly he and his charge took ship in an English merchantman; and on 12 August 1809 landed on the shores of England, an island not generally known for the benignity of its climate.

On the eve of his departure he had proposed marriage to his Anna-Lisa, and had been accepted; though the engagement turned out to be longer than they

had expected. And it is mainly from his letters to her that we know what he thought of England and the English, upon his first encountering them. Very good letters they are: so good, that he was not ashamed to reprint many of them in his *Memoirs*, a quarter of a century later. He came to England rather prejudiced against the country than otherwise. But his object was to broaden his mind, to increase his range of observation, to extend his information; and his letters show how conscientiously he devoted himself to the study of things English, with what attention he observed English manners, and with what sureness he apprehended English ideas. They show, too, a progressive change of attitude. The slightly patronising tone of the earlier letters gives place to respect, and at last to something near enthusiasm. He could not love the country; no consideration would induce him to live in it; but he could not help admiring.

For most educated Swedes, if they happened to feel a need to amuse themselves, or to broaden their minds, the idea of doing so by travelling to England was not one which often occurred to them. They did to an increasing extent read English authors; but few of them aspired to speak the English language. They might read de Lolme on the English constitution; but they felt no great urge to observe its operations at close quarters. If they went to England at all, it was for other, practical, purposes: if they were scientists, to make contact with their colleagues in the Royal Society; if agronomists, to acquaint themselves with English innovations in husbandry; if merchants or manufacturers, to cultivate contacts with English clients and capitalists, or — not seldom — to practise industrial espionage. Most Swedish travellers headed instinctively for Paris, and many continued the habit during the first years of the Revolution; though thereafter philosophers and *litterati* found themselves drawn to Denmark, or to Germany.

To these generalisations three major Swedish authors provided exceptions. The first of them was Thorild, whose volcanic irruption into the decent classicism of the age of Leopold generated much acrimonious controversy. Thorild spent sixteen months in England in 1788—89. It was not admiration of English literature that attracted him, nor a desire to master the language — though his admiration was genuine and informed, and his command of English soon proved adequate to the writing of characteristically bad-tempered pamphlets in that language — but his enthusiasm for what he supposed to be the unique excellences of the English constitution. A very short experience of its operation sufficed to dispel that illusion. He soon became a violent anti-Pittite; denounced Pitt's handling of the regency question in a sulphurous pamphlet entitled *The Royal Moon*; poured scorn and contempt upon the servile populace who joined in the services of thanksgiving for the King's recovery; and flounced out of England despairing of the nation.<sup>3</sup> Very different was the case of Frans Michael Franzén, who came to England (from Finland) in 1796.<sup>4</sup> Franzén was a young man of twenty-three: a lyric poet, mild and inclined to sentiment, who esteemed himself a connoisseur of the drama. What impelled Franzén to travel

was his enthusiasm for the French Revolution, and his determination to participate in the exhilaration of that great event. But for him, as for Thorild, what began as a faith turned out to be a mockery. The French Revolution, seen at close quarters, was clearly an odious tyranny. And as to the French drama, he had little good to say about that either: French acting was artificial, Alexandrines were intolerably monotonous, and he found he had no difficulty in sleeping through *Phèdre*. It was with a feeling of emancipation that he tore off the revolutionary cockade from his coat and cast it into the sea, as soon as his ship for England had quitted its French harbour. And on the other side of the Channel he found a land of congenial spirits; the land of Fielding and Goldsmith, of Young and Gray and Ossian; but above all, the land of liberty.

The contrasting experiences of Thorild and Franzén are unlikely to have affected Geijer. Franzén's journal was not to be published for more than a century; and though Geijer was later to undertake an edition of Thorild's works (a task of which he speedily wearied, and contrived to shuffle off on to somebody else), it does not appear that he was acquainted with *The Royal Moon*. The family at Ransäter had been interested in the news of the early stages of the Revolution, as being (in Geijer's words) something which — at a proper distance — “can be enjoyed as a dessert after dinner”. But the murder of Gustav III could not be talked down to this level: the reaction at Ransäter was one of horror. When Geijer set foot in England in 1809 his predispositions were certainly not French.

But neither were they English. In any case, it was to be expected that he should have some difficulty in easily adjusting himself to the new environment. To come from Värmland to East Anglia, from Uppsala to Oxford, and above all from Stockholm to London, must have been felt at times as a painful contrast. No doubt it was some consolation to him to be able to describe St James's as “a miserable shack” when compared with Tessin's Royal Palace in Stockholm. As he remembered the great forests of Sweden, where the charcoal-burner's hut might be the only habitation for a dozen English miles, it was no wonder if the English countryside seemed a garden (Geijer had never seen Skåne), or the population somewhat thick upon the ground. The sheer wealth of the country, agricultural as well as commercial, was something outside his experience. The clustering masts in the Thames, the massive closed faces of the great warehouses, the rush and hurry of city life — these had no real parallel in a Stockholm where the Gustavians still lingered, and where memories of Bellman still were vivid. As he stood in the gallery of the Royal Exchange and observed the milling crowd below, he permitted himself to indulge in a romantic reverie which was perhaps not entirely self-conscious. His thoughts shaped themselves into sentences now worn threadbare by hard Victorian usage; but for him it was a moving experience to stand “at the hub of the world's commerce”, and to figure to himself how the dealings of this man or that might send the merchantman driving over the oceans to bring back the spices of Asia or the wealth of the Americas.

As long as he remained in London, this sense of strangeness prevented his doing much more than note points of difference. He felt to the full the solitariness of a great city, and having no English friend or acquaintance, could do little more than guess at what lay behind the façade of English life. Very soon, however, he moved out to Stoke Newington to learn English in the family of the Rev. Thomas Rees, a Dissenter and a radical, and here for the first time he came into continuous personal contact with English people. And to begin with he found them hardly less strange than they had appeared to be. In matters of taste and habits of mind, Sweden in the eighteenth century fell very largely under French influence, escaping that anglomania which so afflicted France itself. Swedish political and social life acquired a French colouring: to some extent, perhaps, the Swedish national character did so too. The French emphasis upon elegance of manners, upon politeness rather than candour, upon compliments, reinforced a passion for formality which was typical of the Sweden of those days. Not unnaturally, then, Geijer was disconcerted at the ease and naturalness of English manners. The disproportion between the immensity of the country's wealth and the modesty of its display continually provoked his comment. Here were none of the elaborate courtesies or the cumbrous titles so carefully accorded at home. All was informal, expeditious, practical, as befitted a commercial nation. In the upper ranks no arrogance, in the lower no servility; in both a self-assurance within the social framework which seemed to him admirable. It is not easy for us to perceive in the society which produced the splendours of Stowe and Dropmore, Woburn and Fonthill, "a republican simplicity of manners"; but Geijer thought he saw it. Above all it was the frankness and candour of English intercourse that impressed him: there was none of the malice and *tracasserie*, the posing and the charlatanry, which vitiated social life in Gustavian Stockholm. "To study the genuine English character", he wrote, "in its pure — I might almost say, crude — candour and sincerity, is for a Swede a cure, if not exactly a pleasure".

A republican simplicity may easily serve as a pretext for mere boorishness, as readers of Mrs Trollope and other early travellers in the United States will remember. Geijer considered that the English escaped this danger in virtue of their kindness and good-nature. And these two qualities combined to produce a third — respect for the convenience of others. The Englishman did not talk when his companion wished to be silent, was attentive in his carving to individual tastes, thought it impolite to mask the fire with his person, offered his seat to ladies when travelling: in short, every man observed his neighbour's right to be comfortable, to luxuriate in his own society, and in his own way to *enjoy himself* — a phrase which he thought typical of the English mentality.

And this being comfortable lay at the root of English life and character. *Comfort* was the great object of social and individual endeavour,<sup>5</sup> the great criterion of achievement, the dominant characteristic of all things English, from religion to eating. It was obscurely associated, he felt, with great national institutions such as tea and toast (this last a delicious novelty), or the yet more sac-

ramental roast beef. It was nicely accordant with that reasonableness and common-sense which was a salient trait in most Englishmen. The appeal to reason was to be heard from all ranks and in all circumstances: thus a London policeman, confronted with an incipient brawl, would cry "Now don't put yourself in a passion, sir; now pray don't". The contempt in which (as he found to his surprise) most Englishmen held foreigners — and especially Frenchmen — arose largely from the circumstance that they were esteemed unreasonable, volatile, emotional. And since the Englishman was a rational being, he did not make the mistake of trying to import an element of rationality into things which were themselves irrational. Hence the cult of fashion was more absurd, was pushed to greater extremes, in England than elsewhere; hence an Englishman, when he gambled, gambled more insanely than any foreigner.

Perhaps Geijer would have been less favourably impressed by the English character had his observations stopped short at this point. But there were two other things about the English which made a deep impression on him, and which he never forgot. One was the patriotism of the average man. It was, of course, the period of Gillray's most outrageous cartoons, the period when George III (defying the French), bathed at Weymouth to the strains of the National Anthem: never had John Bull appeared more bullish. After all, Britain was fighting for her life without any other ally than the King of Sweden; and before Geijer had been long in England the revolution of 1809 had removed even this somewhat equivocal prop. To Geijer, coming from a Sweden riddled with disloyalty, enervated, discontented, discouraged, and declining, there was something invigorating in the solidarity and self-confidence of the English: he was to do his utmost on his return to foster what he believed might be a similar spirit in Sweden. The other English ideal which he remembered in after-years was that of the English gentleman. It would perhaps be embarrassing to follow him in his enthusiastic rhapsodies upon this elusive term; but they issued in the conclusion that no country lacking the idea of a gentleman was to be accounted civilized — though he regretfully admitted that it would not be easy to transplant the gentlemanly ethos into the predominantly peasant society of his native land.

There was, happily, an offset to this somewhat cloying eulogium. With all their national virtues, the English appeared to be deplorably lacking in Taste. They had little appreciation of beauty. Their cities were abominably ugly, and their own persons consistently plain — always excepting the children, whom he found enchanting. He professed never, in all the months of his stay in England, to have seen a beautiful woman — a circumstance no doubt reassuring to his Anna-Lisa. He objected to their mannish stride; he cavilled at their taste in dress; he thought their conversation insipid; he condemned their dancing as execrable. In the English interpretation, fashion was no more than a methodical *gaucherie*; and the grand company in the Pump Room at Bath appeared supremely ridiculous. His own taste had been formed on French models: so, for instance, in regard to architecture. In London he admired only St Paul's and Greenwich Hospital. Bristol, which Landor thought the most picturesque city

in England, and which Franzén admired for its liveliness and activity, he dismissed as uninteresting; while upon Oxford he did not bestow a word.<sup>6</sup> Like Franzén, he did not take kindly to Gothic architecture — though he might well have had reservations about Franzén's remark that "To compare Westminster Abbey with St Paul's is to compare Ennius with Virgil".<sup>7</sup> But as he grew accustomed to what had been unfamiliar he learnt to qualify his opinions. After all, he had come from a country where the Gothic style was not merely unfashionable, but exceptionally poorly represented. Before he left England he could feel all the correct sensibility at the sight of an ivy-clad ruin; and he allowed himself to have been genuinely impressed by Exeter Cathedral, though sadly distracted by Anglican chanting of the Psalms. Just how educative his visit to England had been in this respect may be deduced from his enthusiasm for Cologne Cathedral, when he visited Germany in 1825.

It was perhaps too much to expect that Geijer's opinions should undergo any change in regard to English music, which showed somewhat pale and sickly in the shadow still cast by the colossal bulk of Handel. Arne, indeed, was still played: Geijer heard *Artaxerxes* (surely one of the last performances of this opera?), and liked it; Samuel Wesley nobly upheld the great traditions of English church music; but Boyce was almost forgotten except for his collection of anthems, while Purcell and the Elizabethans were almost as though they had never been. Instead, there were Shield and Storace and Dibdin — "pretty warblers of the grove" — and glees and catches in indistinguishable profusion. Yet the influence of Handel, and the comparatively recent visit of Haydn, did something to keep the public taste clean; the concerts of Antient Music still persisted; and the Philharmonic Society was soon to distinguish itself by its munificence to Beethoven. English audiences endured Gargantuan concerts with a patience and apparent appetite which would not have disgraced Beethoven's Viennese.

Geijer was privileged to be present in the Surrey Chapel to hear Samuel Wesley performing on the organ. For three hours he played Bach preludes and fugues, while the audience listened with stoic fortitude; and Geijer was moved to comment: "Englishmen are at least the best *listeners* in the whole Christian and musical world". Moreover,

... their artistic sense ... limited and maybe sluggish as it is, is not indurated by prejudice. So far as it goes it is healthy and by no means dogmatically rigid; but accessible, unpretentious, and impartial. — They are in this respect far better than the French. — The simple or crude English aesthetic sense is impressed by the force and sublimity of ecclesiastical music, and indeed by all music in strict form, to such an extent that this *genre* may be considered native to the country. It is moreover clear that the principal responsibility for this lies with Handel. The logic with which they allow themselves to be bound by precedent, by the sanctity of any usage once approved, is a national characteristic which appears everywhere, from the history of their parliament to the history of their music.

Of this he received a striking endorsement when he attended a performance of *Messiah* — a work which made an overwhelming impression upon him: "You

cannot conceive of the effect of the choruses in this oratorio ... It was as if my feeling had been awakened to the discovery of new realms of sound; so astonishingly great and powerful, so divine is this music". And at the great climactic moment of the "Hallelujah" chorus the English respect for precedent was duly made manifest, when to Geijer's astonishment "all the audience rose to their feet and *removed their hats*."<sup>8</sup>

He did not think so well of English singers. He was indeed profoundly stirred by Braham's singing of "Deeper and deeper still";<sup>9</sup> but the experience led him to reflections upon English taste in vocal music. In general, he disapproved of the profusion of ornament with which soloists overlaid the melodic line: Braham was especially a sinner in this respect, and Geijer thought him at his best in unsophisticated music such as *The Death of Nelson*.

Braham is a real English singer, an excellent singer of music in the English taste. This taste does not demand of a song a distinctive melody and declamation, it demands only that the melody shall be *simple, pleasing* to the ear, and so *vague* that the singer may decorate it according to his fancy without spoiling it ... In this respect English taste in music is identical with English taste in painting. — The sensuously pleasing, the attractively coloured, or — one degree more exalted — the tender, the moving — these are the beauties that are sought after. Character they understand only as caricature (*vide* the print-sellers' stalls, or listen to popular singers!)

It was not only in music that Geijer sought relaxation. He went to the pantomime, and found it "appallingly sentimental". He went to Sadler's Wells, and saw the water spectacle. He went to Vauxhall, and was as delighted with it as English visitors are with that modern Vauxhall, the Tivoli in Copenhagen. He went to Astley's and saw the circus; and perhaps, like Dickens a decade later, heard the clown address to the celebrated equestrienne that convulsively humorous enquiry, "Now Miss Woolford, what can I come for to go, for to fetch, for to bring, for to carry, for to do for you, ma'am?"<sup>10</sup>

And of course he went to the theatre: was not Shakespeare one of his favourite authors? He could not match Franzén's score of nine different Shakespeare plays within a few weeks, and from some points of view his visit came a decade too late. Franzén saw Kemble and Mrs Siddons in their prime; Geijer arrived when they were near the end of their careers. Mrs Siddons was to retire in 1812, and was touring the provinces: in this summer of 1809 she was at Liverpool, where Miss Weeton, in her own inimitably dreary fashion, permitted herself to enjoy her *Lady Macbeth*. Kean's vivid genius had still four years to wait for his first London appearance, and the grumbling enthusiasm of Hazlitt. The only notable actors that Geijer saw were Cooke and Kemble. Cooke, of whom Leigh Hunt wrote that "he took almost all the ideal out of tragedy, but put some good stuff into it" (whatever that may mean) appeared reeling drunk and had to be removed; upon which his part was read by the prompter, apparently to the entire satisfaction of the audience. Kemble, whom Geijer saw in *Hamlet*, he judged to be an actor to inspire respect rather than enthusiasm: plenty of care



and intelligence, but a certain lack of spontaneity; a verdict which coincides strikingly with that which was later pronounced by Leigh Hunt. Elliston he never saw. No doubt the long continuance of the O.P. riots,<sup>11</sup> and his own removal from London, prevented him from visiting the playhouse as often as he would have wished. But what he saw may have spurred him to produce a Swedish version of *Macbeth*: the first translation of Shakespeare into Swedish, and written, moreover, in blank verse.<sup>12</sup>

The O.P. riots were not the only popular disturbance to take place within the span of Geijer's visit; and a foreigner might have been excused if he had drawn erroneous conclusions about the stability of British institutions. Certainly it was a troubled period. He had hardly landed in the country before the Portland administration broke up, in consequence of the quarrel between Castlereagh and Canning; and within a few weeks those statesmen had fought a duel which resulted in Canning's receiving Castlereagh's bullet in that portion of his person delicately alluded to by contemporaries as "the fleshy part of the thigh". The expedition to Walcheren was already a failure, and was soon to become a disaster. In Spain affairs were going badly; and Lady Holland and her Lord, who had gone to animate the insurrection by their presence on the spot, had decided that it was all over, and time to come home. The new administration of Spencer Perceval seemed ready at any moment to sink under the weight of cumulative misfortunes. "That tyresome hippocritical Colonel Wardle" was making all England ring with the scandal of the Duke of York and Mrs Clarke; so that sporting characters when they tossed a coin cried "Duke" or "Darling", rather than heads or tails. Even the Whig opposition was showing an occasional pale glimmer, comparable by the malevolent with the phosphorescence that attends upon decay. And outside Parliament, in the great unruly constituencies of Westminster and Southwark, arose a cry against corruption, and afterwards a cry for reform of the representation, such as England had not heard for over a decade. Geijer's stay coincided with the passage of Curwen's Act, which prohibited the sale of seats, and with the most important motion for parliamentary reform since 1797: it was the very moment of the birth of the new movement which was to gather its first-fruits in 1832.

He was thus presented with a comprehensive picture of weakness abroad and demagogic agitation at home. He squeezed himself into Guildhall, to listen to the inflammatory speeches in which Waithman and his fellow Aldermen expressed their resentment at the King's refusal to receive in person their petition against the government. He was in the gallery of the House when Charles Yorke "spied strangers" (the traditional formula for enabling the Commons to evict those present who were not Members of Parliament), and so set on foot that singular train of events which terminated in the arrest of Sir Francis Burdett by the Sergeant-at-Arms, and the subsequent terrorisation of respectable London by the mob of Burdett's infuriated supporters. In the *Political Register* he read — with disgust — the promiscuous invective of Cobbett; in *The Edinburgh Review* he read the famous 'Don Cevallos' article which led Walter Scott

to cancel his subscription; on the other side, he read the less inspiring sarcasms of Coleridge in the *Courier*. He must have had the opportunity to acquaint himself with Wordsworth's *Tract on the Convention of Cintra*, published this year; but he does not seem to have taken it.

Such a press of events, such a violent clashing of opinions, might easily have obscured the real issues. Geijer kept them pretty clear. His comments on English politics are judicious and appropriate — though Landquist, presumably disappointed of profound philosophical speculations, dismissed them as “superficial and unimportant.”<sup>13</sup> They were in fact neither the one nor the other: not superficial, for they penetrated below the transient issues of the day; not unimportant, for they recorded impressions which affected his political behaviour, at one time or another, for most of the rest of his life. Much as he admired the dignity, solidity and antiquity of British institutions, he perceived the need for change, and recorded his opinion that sooner or later a change would be inevitable. England appeared to him to be not so much a conservative country as a country hastening to a political crisis by reason of the fact that extreme liberal principles had obtained a hold upon the masses, while their rulers lingered far behind. He saw the mobs; and disliked and feared what he saw. For Cobbett's journalism he had not merely distaste but contempt. By temperament, if not by birth, a true aristocrat, he could write (echoing Shakespeare) of popular meetings’ “uttering a deal of stinking breath”; but he did see that behind all the posturings of Burdett and the enthusiasms of Cartwright lay the ideal of popular liberty: it is a measure of his insight (or perhaps the conversation of the Rev. Thomas Rees) that he should have written of the Methodists as now being supporters of “despotism” — by which he meant the Tory government. He understood how deeply the mass of the people was alienated — not merely from Perceval's ministry, but from political parties without distinction; and that parliament itself had become an object of popular contempt and hatred, to a degree unknown since the days of Wilkes. In the gallery of the House of Commons he encountered a Burdettite, who proceeded to enlighten him, as an ignorant foreigner, upon these and other matters; and probably reproduced for his benefit specimens of the oratory of the Crown and Anchor Tavern. Geijer made a note of the episode:

My neighbour became so much of an annoyance that I had to change places. His clothes, speech, and the perfume of Gin around him, showed to what class he belonged — He had never before been in Parliament — attacked me immediately with an assertion that that place presented the greatest spectacle the world can show — that he as an Englishman was proud of it — that principles are the thing, with much more such stuff which he had heard repeated, and learnt to repeat himself. He asked if I had seen Sir Francis — spoke of Bonaparte, how he is laughing at the English ministry — that no minister is any good — they are all alike — that reform, etc., etc. — that he feared — although he did not desire — that the French, for lack of reform, would annex England to France, etc. All these are opinions which distinguish the party which calls itself Independents, who are always shouting for reform, but who have however little grasp of reality. — This conversation was notable only because it confirmed what I had heard and ex-

perienced before, namely, that this Independent Party has a strong following among the mob. It is natural that it should have. The fact that this tavern-politician was a Freeholder became apparent when, after he had attacked everybody with his republican slogans and no one paid any attention to him, he shouted out quite loudly: "the freeholders of this country are not to be insulted"; whereupon he instantly fell asleep for the rest of the debate.

It would be difficult to find a more lively reproduction of the spirit of the extra-parliamentary agitation which Burdett and Wardle organized, and with which Whitbread and the more farseeing Whigs forced themselves into a temporary and fearful dalliance.

By observation and reading, and by encounters such as this, Geijer ended by obtaining a very fair idea of the nature of the English constitution. He appreciated the importance of precedent; he grasped the English insistence on the rule of law; he perceived (as Montesquieu had not) that it was possible for the judiciary to exercise a law-making function. If he tripped up over privilege of Parliament (he based it on the Bill of Rights!), he was not the only man to be muddled: the Burdett case had set the constitutional lawyers at loggerheads. He believed that the secret of the survival of the constitution through periods of crisis and revolution was its flexibility, and its ability to comprise apparently conflicting principles: so, for instance, with the Glorious Revolution, which succeeded in blending "the feudal and republican principles".<sup>14</sup> He thoroughly understood the implications of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility; in this respect comparing Sweden under her new constitution with England, to Sweden's disadvantage. And he summed up his impressions of English political life by saying quite simply: "This is the freest country in the world"; and he found no difficulty in reconciling this judgment with a growing sense of the organic development of society and social institutions as a process directly deriving from God. Among the authors whose works made a lasting impression on him was Edmund Burke; and like Burke he could without apparent inconsistency glory in English liberty and recoil from the prospect of revolutionary violence. Yet despite the ominous experience of the Burdett riots he was nevertheless able to pronounce England to be (for the moment) "a finished, settled society" — at all events, compared with the Sweden he had left, and to which he was shortly to return.

For by the autumn of 1810 it was time to be turning homewards. He had spent a delightful summer at Sidmouth (dismissed rather peevishly by Southey — in his *Letters of Espriella* — as "a nasty watering-place, infested by lounging ladies, and full of footmen"); he had mastered the clarinet, and scandalised his landlady by playing the piano on a Sunday; he had finished a piano sonata in F minor; he had written verses to Anna-Lisa. But news had come that he had obtained his docentship in history at Uppsala, and he must return to serious work. For the last time he bowled along the turnpike roads, "smooth as a carpet"; for the last time admired the comfort of well-sprung English carriages; for the last time was lapped in the inimitable hospitality of the English inn. The

English episode was over: over, without his having attempted to see much more of England than London, Bath and Sidmouth. For the rest, his ignorance was total. The contrast with Franzén is striking. Franzén may have cared little for English politics, but at least he had seen Birmingham and Ironbridge<sup>15</sup> (which he thought “incomparably beautiful”); he had fared from Warrington to Manchester by the Bridgewater Canal; he had seen the towns of the West Riding, and Nottingham also; and he had even made an excursion into Wales, and made a note of a poem in Welsh. No opportunity ever presented itself for Geijer to repair these omissions, and for the present they probably seemed not to matter. But twenty years on, as he contemplated from a distance the English Industrial Revolution, he may well have regretted a lost opportunity to obtain a first-hand impression of Lancashire and the Black Country.

It was not long before he settled down in Uppsala to the academic life, and began to take his profession seriously. He won the Academy's Gold Medal for the second time, with a philosophical essay in the English manner. He began to develop an interest in politics. In 1816 he at last was able to afford to marry his Anna-Lisa. And he began to lay the foundation of his fame as a poet. In 1811 he had joined with some of his friends from Värmland in organizing a society which they called “The Gothic League”. Its aim was nothing less than national regeneration; which was to be effected through a return to the great traditions of former days. It looked back for inspiration to the old Vikings, or in a nearer view to Charles XII. Its members dreamed, not so much of reviving the faded glories of Swedish imperialism, as of recapturing the moral qualities which (they believed) had once made Sweden great. Gustavian Sweden had been obsessed with a passion for Orders and Fraternities, each — at least nominally — with a high moral purpose, each with its elaborate hierarchy and its ludicrous pantomime of ceremonial. By 1811 the high summer of such associations was almost over; but it lasted long enough to have some influence on the proceedings of the Gothic League. Their ritual endeavoured to recall the domestic customs and heroic greetings of the Viking age: when they drank, they marched in procession round the table chanting a song written by one of the members, of which the first line ran: “The Goths in the old days, they drank from the horn” — an example which they faithfully followed, the horn being presumably filled with that unsatisfactory liquor, mead. Each of the brotherhood was to assume a name famous in Nordic legend; and Geijer accordingly became “Einar Tambaskälver”. More constructively, they turned their attention to antiquarian research, published a valuable collection of Swedish folk-songs, and launched a periodical, appropriately entitled *Iduna*, of which Geijer wrote the entire first number himself, as Brougham had done for the first number of the *Edinburgh*.

With the appearance of *Iduna*, the Gothic League linked hands with another set of men of more specifically literary interests, the representatives of a new romantic school of poetry. In 1810 they too began to issue their own journal, *Phosphoros*; whence they took the name of *phosphorism* to describe their

theories. Phosphorism was deeply influenced by the neo-Romantic school of Tieck, Novalis, and E.T.A. Hoffman. It exalted Imagination, despising a bourgeois literalness; it accounted obscurity no sin; it revered the piety and feudal principles of the Middle Ages; and it was drenched in the somewhat cloudy and liverish wine of German philosophy. In spite of these disadvantages, it produced two major Swedish poets. One of them, Stagnelius, lived in obscurity and died in squalor: a Swedish Keats, cut off in early manhood, and destined to a posthumous fame. The other, Atterbom, was very much alive as the acknowledged leader of the phosphorist school. In his long poem, *Lycksalighetens Ö (The Isle of Bliss)* the Swedish neo-Romantic movement found its typical expression. Atterbom was enchanted with *Iduna*. In 1813 he met Geijer; they became fast friends; and thenceforward for some years the Gothic League linked hands with the phosphorists. Together, they formed a body of opinion which echoed in Swedish accents affirmations which in the years after 1815 affected much of Europe. Rejecting the *Aufklärung*, with its rational cosmopolitanism and its cult of liberty, they grew sentimental over Throne and Altar, opposed an inflexible resistance to democratic principles, and cultivated nationalism and mysticism. That Geijer should have been drawn in to such company reveals the ambivalence of his English experience, and is to be explained by his conviction that Sweden, after the disasters of 1809, needed somehow to find itself and rediscover a mission, and by his strong conviction that the new Crown Prince, and future King, Carl XIV Johan, was the destined leader of Sweden's resurrection.

It was not, however, until after 1817 that Geijer emerged into prominence in politics. The years that followed the launching of *Iduna* were remarkable rather for the flowering of a poetic genius which was afterwards curiously intermittent. Almost all the verse which places him among the significant Swedish poets comes from these years. Most of it appeared in *Iduna*, beginning with *The Viking*, which was inspired by his recollections of the North Sea, and by memories of the breakers at Sidmouth. He chose themes heroic or historical: *The Last Bard*, *Charles XII*, *Gustav Eriksson*: but it was now also that he wrote *The Charcoal-Burner's Boy*, which poignantly conveys the frightening loneliness of those Värmland forests from which the smelters drew the materials for their industry. His verse, fully emancipated from eighteenth-century influences, is free from the obscurities which sometimes involve the phosphorists. Its appeal is direct, and at its best irresistible; and that, no doubt, is why so much of his relatively small output has remained memorable and popular.

It may be that Geijer never realised his full potentialities as a poet: if so, it was possibly because he had far too many extraneous interests. First and foremost, history; for he had now made up his mind that history was to be his profession. Such history as he had absorbed as a student had been history as the historians of the Enlightenment perceived it; for the Swedish historians of the eighteenth century — Dalin, Celsius, Hallenberg, Lagerbring — rarely viewed the past on its own terms. But by 1810, when Geijer began seriously to concern

himself with history, he had clearly fallen under the influence of the Romantics — not only in regard to literature, but in his attitude to his country's past. *Iduna* and *Phosphoros*, with their interest in the sagas, in tradition, in folktales and folk-songs, in the concept of a “national character”, fitted in well with this historical reorientation. Already in 1811 he could write “There can be no culture without tradition”. Walter Scott's verse, and the Waverley novels afterwards, reinforced this trend: of his works Geijer remarked that they contained “a true and idealised *reality*”. Which was as much as to say that *Ivanhoe* was a better guide to the mediaeval world than Voltaire. From March 1815 he began, as substitute for Professor Fant, to deliver lectures; four times a week, as the regulations demanded. In the following year, Fant, “wearying of it”, as Geijer frankly hoped he would, resigned his chair. And in 1817, in the face of strong opposition within the University, but thanks to judicious wire-pulling in high places, and what would now be considered to be shameless canvassing, Geijer was duly appointed ordinary Professor of History in the University of Uppsala.<sup>16</sup> He had hitherto as it were taught himself history as he went along, and in 1817 his productions as a historian certainly could not be said to justify his election to the chair. What turned a questionable appointment, or to put it more harshly, a job, into an extraordinary triumph, was the tremendous impact of his lectures. Uppsala had never heard anything like it before. When Geijer took his seat in the *Gustavianum* (lectures were delivered by the lecturer seated, and with his hat on) that uncomfortable auditorium (almost as offputting as the Sheldonian)<sup>17</sup> was crowded, full to the doors; not only of students but of members of the general public, who came out of curiosity and remained to be spellbound.<sup>18</sup> His pupil and successor, F.F. Carlson (a better historian than his master) said of these lectures that they were characterized by “flashes of light, glowing warmth issuing from the depths of his audience”. In form they were strictly chronological; and he had no scruple about reading long passages from Hallenberg, or Robertson, or Schiller: what saved them, what mattered, was the public projection of his own personality, revealed in the frequent interruption of the narrative by comments, reflections, aphorisms, and his unique ability to make the audience in some sense a participator in his private experience. His audience was moved because Geijer himself was moved, and was not ashamed to show it. The lectures were not without their critics: C.J.L. Almquist did not relish the “ecstasies, passion, tears and antics” which enlivened the proceedings. When in 1819 Prince Oscar — doing an obligatory term at Uppsala — attended his lecture-course, an eyewitness reported: “All silent as the grave; not a dry eye, nor a heart that was not throbbing”. And when in one of his lectures he read “Gustav Vasa's last speech to the *riksdag*”, he rose from his seat and removed his hat; and the whole audience spontaneously followed his example, every eye brimming with tears. He had not heard the “Hallelujah” chorus for nothing. It was perhaps fortunate that nobody seemed to notice that he had lifted the speech *verbatim* from Olof Celsius's biography of Gustav Vasa; and it is to be hoped that Geijer himself did not realise that the speech was wholly

Celsius's invention, according to the approved antique models. Geijer himself in his *Minnen* with admirable candour wrote of his 1815/1819 lectures that they "bore witness more to fantasy and feeling than to understanding and insight"; and this may perhaps stand as a judicious verdict.

At all events, this extraordinary success persuaded him — perhaps impelled him — to write history, and not merely to talk it. His fame as a historian rests on two big works, both of them mere fragments of vaster designs. One of these — *Svea Rikes Hävder (Annals of the Swedish Realm)*, of which the first volume appeared in 1825 — was intended to be a survey, on a grand scale, of Sweden's land and people from earliest times: all of it that was ever finished was this introductory volume. It was not a publishing success, and the only substantial review of it, curiously enough, was an anonymous piece in an English periodical, *The Foreign Review*. The second work was intended as a sort of abridgment of the unwritten volumes of the first. It appeared, in four volumes, from 1832 to 1836, under the title of *Svenska Folkets Historia (History of the Swedish People)*, which carried the story no further than the reign of Christina; and though Geijer made some progress with later instalments the work was never completed. The material for the reigns of Charles XI and Charles XII was so discouragingly large that he preferred to go on to the Age of Liberty, to the history of which he made a significant contribution, and to an edition of the papers of Gustavus III, though this too was never completed. Nevertheless, it is for *Svenska Folkets Historia* that Geijer is mainly known abroad; for the work was commissioned for the Heeren-Ukert series, and subsequently translated into many European languages. It did not sell well at home; but it remains a traditional standard work, gathering dust on the shelves of university libraries.

Swedish historians are mostly agreed in considering Geijer as an epoch-making figure in the historiography of their country. "With Geijer", wrote Ludvig Stavenow, "began that profounder conception of history which was the main contribution of Romanticism to historical science. From Geijer there derives an unbroken succession of his pupils, and his pupils' pupils ... in whom the view of history which was their master's has remained alive ... Geijer can therefore be said to be the direct founder of modern Swedish historiography". This is a large claim, and one can understand that it has some basis. But the more we scrutinize it, the less it convinces. Geijer had merits evident to any historian: a passion for the subject, capacity for broad sweeping surveys, flashes of illumination, a feeling of personal, moral, responsibility. But he brought to the writing of history some of the habits of the lecturer; and they were not always appropriate. He took it for granted that the reader could safely be assumed to share his opinions: "We ...", he begins a sentence, over and over again. He was prepared to risk (sometimes with success) the rhetorical question: "Who does not ...? [etc.];" or the passionate exclamation: "O!, what a ...!" — and so forth. Religious and philosophical excursions could interrupt the narrative, to the

exasperation of at any rate some readers; and he was fertile of oracular utterances, some of which do not look as impressive in print as they may have sounded in the *Gustavianum*, though some are justly remembered: as for instance "The Union of Kalmar was an accident that looked like an idea". He could conclude a chapter or round off a topic with a succession of verbal hammer-blows reminiscent of the forges of his native Värmland. Yet his histories are not felt to be easy reading nowadays. They seem overloaded with private speculations and meditations: often he gives the impression of thinking aloud — and at large. It was in violation of his own emphatically-enunciated principle that he saw the past through the distorting glass of his own powerful personality; and if this were made a charge against him (as it later was, by Fryxell) he had his answer ready: "If anything is clear about history", he wrote, "it is this: that it is the personal that is most important". Historical figures translated their personalities into their actions: thus "Banér has depicted his soul in his campaigns". But both events and personalities were to be judged by two universally-applicable criteria: in the first place, were they, or were they not, "latent"? "Latent", he explained, on the analogy of latent heat; though it is pretty clear that what he meant by the word was something like "pregnant with the future": as he wrote, "It is such men, pregnant with the future, who, with or without willing it, draw the peoples after them"; and it was to such men that he paid his tribute of reverence or affection. Hence his famous, much-quoted sentence on Gustavus Adolphus: "There is over his whole life a sense of space, more easily to be felt than described. It is the limitless comprehensive view of the world which is innate in all conquerors". Even Charles IX is commended, "because it is in his soul, more perhaps than in the soul of any of his contemporaries, that the blazing future which issued in the Thirty Years War is at work". The second criterion by which history was to be judged was what he termed *sammanhang*, that is, the links, the interconnections within a long view of the context, in the development of human history. It was these two preoccupations which led him to write: "Every idea is of account in history only through its practical force. If it lacks that, it has no place in history". This is no doubt to be seen as a reaction against what he considered to be Fryxell's accumulation of accidental facts; but it also has the disastrous consequence that at one stroke all lost causes are swept out of the historical arena: failures have no place in history. This is Whig history pushed to the limit, or beyond. After this pronouncement it was vain for Geijer to insist that what has happened must be allowed to speak for itself; for much of it was doomed to be for ever silent inasmuch as it had no future, and the remainder, in so far as it could be allowed to be latent, was to speak like one of his Uppsala lectures. Moreover, it was unfortunately the case that though he developed a sufficiently stringent critical model in theory, he failed to apply his criteria in practice, and was far from being a scientific historian in the sense that Niebuhr and Ranke were. He was by no means a systematic or thorough utiliser of such sources as were available to him, still less of those foreign archives from which Fryxell reaped so rich a harvest. Of his



researches in the Swedish archives his Uppsala colleague Israel Hwasser reported that “with his poetic view he misread, skipped over; and became neither a chronicler nor philosophical expositor of the basis of civilisation” — a verdict which Ludwig Stavenow softened to: “Geijer picked out, with sure instinct, the essentials of the main sources, and took from them what was suited to the purpose of demonstrating a *sammanhang* in development”. Put like this, it is a sin from which, no doubt, few of us are wholly free.

Geijer might, or might not, have acknowledged these blemishes; but he would probably have retorted that the historian has a higher, moral, responsibility. It is his duty to be the “interpreter of Fate”, and no lesser consideration must stand in the way of fulfilling that duty: he must persuade his readers to come to terms with Fate — “as the peasant does”. This offers a useful contrast to Ranke, for whom the historian’s concern was the past *as* the past, without regard to what might be latent in it, or how it fitted the historian’s exposition of Fate. Ranke represents not only the rejection of the historiography of the Enlightenment but also of the special variety of Whig history to which Geijer was committed. Ranke’s systematisation of research; his insistence on “scientific” accuracy; the range of his explorations of the archives; his elimination, as far as he could manage it, of the personal factor — these were qualities which were alien to Geijer’s practice: archival research was a chore which he undertook without enthusiasm. It has often been said that Geijer was responsible for the introduction into Swedish historiography of the new criteria which represented one of Ranke’s most conspicuous contributions to nineteenth-century historiography. The facts do not support the contention. The real breakthrough in Sweden did not come until 1855, when two of Geijer’s (and Ranke’s) pupils — F.F. Carlson and C.G. Malmström — simultaneously published the first volumes of their great narratives. In comparison with them, Geijer looks at times like a philosophical, at times like an inspired, amateur: a great man who wrote history, but hardly a great historian.

It was his misfortune that he was too versatile. He could always be seduced from his unfinished histories to improvise at the piano — of which art he was a master — or to discuss politics or philosophy. In the drawing-rooms of Uppsala he enjoyed an ascendancy which did him a real disservice. Here Malla Silfverstolpe presided over her literary salon; and in this circle Geijer was the acknowledged lion, playing Johnson to her Mrs Thrale. As he grew older, he fell into the despotic, bludgeoning Johnsonian manner, and either monologized, or shared with his friend Järta a conversational duumvirate which left little opening to outsiders. He spent more and more of his time composing, and the last decade of his life was the most fertile of all in the field of music. He had much success with his settings of his own and other lyrics: his chamber music is now forgotten, but is said to be worth exploration. His importance in Sweden’s musical history lies less in what he did than in his being a cause of doing in others — by his friendship with Lindblad, and not least by his wise and steady encouragement of Jenny Lind.

Politics, too, became an increasing distraction. For twenty years after his return from London Geijer's politics reflected influences which he had absorbed in England. He had been deeply impressed by Burke's *Reflections*, and at this stage we may think of him as a neo-Burkeian, convinced of the organic nature of the state, accepting the importance of tradition and prescription, repudiating "Natural Rights" and the contractual basis of society. (Of Locke he remarked on one occasion that in his account of 1689 he had inserted an unhistorical theoretical explanation into an already achieved result; and he found Locke's writings so dry that he professed to be able to read them in comfort only in the open air). His observation of the structure of English society and institutions made him believe in the political rights of the *educated* classes, and hence he held that the influence of the aristocracy in the House of Commons was on the whole beneficent. His difficulty on his return home was to decide how much of this intellectual baggage could be fitted comfortably into the Swedish situation. His hatred of Napoleon and his admiration for Carl XIV Johan made it easy for him to reject French principles, and he did not believe in a liberty so wide as to leave the way open to the mob: after all, he had seen the Burdett riots, and though still in England when the Stockholm mob murdered the younger Fersen, the story can have lost nothing in the telling. As he came to apply himself to Swedish history he came to the conclusion — which he never afterwards entirely abandoned — that the Swedish state was based on the alliance of king and people. On their coöperation all depended, each looking to and relying on the other. It was a relationship which he believed to have been operative throughout Swedish history: a warm and trusting relationship when affairs were well ordered, an unnatural antipathy when they were not. Within this pattern there was not much room for the nobility; and this led Anders Fryxell to attack Geijer for anti-aristocratic prejudice. A long and bitter controversy followed, not extinguished by Geijer's death. Viewed after a century and a half, it seems that though Fryxell did not succeed in convicting Geijer of prejudice, he did draw attention to his neglect, or underestimate, of the essential part played by the nobility in asserting and maintaining the principle of the Rule of Law. At all events, Geijer came to the conclusion that the constitution of 1809 was as safe a compromise as Sweden could risk, at least for the present: ministerial responsibility was (up to a point) safe-guarded; the traditional representation in four Estates seemed to suit the country's needs; a strong monarchy was required to brace the spirit of the nation, and to ensure that liberty went hand in hand with law-abidingness.

For more than twenty years after his return, therefore, Geijer was the champion of the principle *quieta non movere*, and the consistent opponent of most proposals for reform. He soon became the leading publicist on the anti-liberal side; and around him gathered a body of opinion known to its opponents as "Uppsala Ultraism". The name was a little unfair to Geijer. It is true that he approved (at first) of the Holy Alliance, but he did so on religious rather than secular grounds; and he condemned some of the excesses of the continental reaction. In general, he was probably nearer to Castlereagh than to Polignac.

After the Revolution of July, however, "Uppsala Ultraism" began to wear a little thin. Even in Sweden the agitations of 1830 left their mark. In that year Lars Johan Hierta founded *Aftonbladet* as the organ of the Liberal cause, and so initiated a struggle for the freedom of the press which he was to bring to a triumphant conclusion in 1844. Events in England — the Reform Bill, the new Poor Law, the triumph of the Whigs — encouraged Swedish progressives. As the decade advanced there arose an agitation for an extension of the franchise, and for a ministerial responsibility to parliament which should be a reality. The old king had become unpopular, and his Court still more so, though Geijer continued to be his supporter — possibly preferring Carl XIV Johan to Louis Philippe as a type of constitutional sovereign. But as the unrest continued, he began to re-examine his opinions, and to test more carefully the grounds upon which he believed them to be based. It might have been more comfortable for him if he had accepted an offer to make him Bishop of Karlstad in his native Värmland; but if he felt it to be a temptation he seems to have had no difficulty in resisting it.

For now at last that other strand of influences which he had absorbed in England emerged into the open — the strand which had probably originated in the household of the Rev. Thomas Rees, and had been strengthened by the polemics of the *Edinburgh*. The English influence was not the only one moving him in the same direction: both Lamennais' *Paroles d'un croyant* (1834) and Tocqueville's *America* (1836) played their part in preparing the crisis which was to come in 1838. But he had always been a regular reader of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, and between 1836 and 1837 the space which they devoted to such questions as the new Poor Law, ecclesiastical reform, child labour, factory hours, and freer trade, stirred his conscience as never before. He might still be a Tory of sorts, but it was no longer of Sidmouth's sort: it was the sort of Sadler and Southey. As yet it was not to all appearance a very serious breach with his political past; but it led to other intellectual readjustments: among them, a strong tincture of Nassau Senior. Thence it proved an easy transition from free trade to parliamentary reform. His researches into the history of eighteenth-century Sweden, and the book on the Age of Liberty which emerged from them, went far to subvert his faith in the old *riksdag* of four Estates, and made him ready as never before to contemplate constitutional change at home.

The result was the famous "Defection" of 1838, when he ostentatiously abandoned the Ultras and declared himself an independent supporter of liberal causes. His action was a first-class political sensation. And the change was not merely political: by a brutal review of Atterbom's poems he cut himself off from his old literary associates. His "Defection", to which he gave wide — and unnecessary — publicity, has since been exhaustively analysed. Geijer himself based it partly on religious principles, partly on a conviction that the liberty of the individual was no longer the decisive criterion, but was transcended by the welfare of the society. There was also a sound historical explanation, as he pointed out; namely, that the new ideas which once he had denounced as unhis-

torical had now securely established themselves; they had proved to have roots deep in the soil of Swedish ideas and Swedish institutions; they had become, in fact, part of history, and therefore must be accepted. This nonchalant response clearly entailed a modification of his view of history itself. It had been preparing already in 1836, when he had written "The true historical school is that which advances with history". By 1844 he felt able to declare that "Every generation feels itself to stand in its own special relation to its predecessors ... Thus history is continually remade, not only by its progress, but even in retrospect". It was a thought which could be reconciled with Geijer's earlier views only by conceding that much which he had once shrugged off as being no part of history was now found by a later generation to be in fact "latent", and that Fate might have other interpretations than he had supposed. But whatever we may think of his attempts to persuade himself that his defection admitted of a logical explanation, it certainly had lasting effects on Swedish politics. It demonstrated, for instance — as Lamennais had tried to show already — that Christianity and Liberalism were not irreconcilable, and so helped to ensure that the parties of the Left should not in Sweden be necessarily secularist — as they were to become, for instance, in France.

He had now, it might be thought, reached the end of the road. He still called himself a Conservative — "but after *my* fashion", and at this stage there was little with which Peel would have found himself in serious disagreement. Until 1841 he was still thinking in terms of a "natural" aristocracy, an aristocracy of virtue and intellect; and to that aristocracy he frankly claimed to belong. And when in 1841 he advocated a franchise graded according to wealth he salved his conscience easily enough with an "enrichissez-vous!". But increasingly he was coming to think of political change as a necessary response to social problems. He had predicted the repeal of the Corn Laws, and lived long enough to see his prediction come true. Chartism he found a disturbing portent, and for a time was inclined to hope that the English middle classes were really conservative at heart, and would be reliable bulwarks of property against the radical working-classes: in the autumn of 1844 he wrote of Peel "the new ministry's *strength* is in reality the middle classes represented by Peel".

But the strength of Peel's ministry, of the middle classes in general, and not least of Swedish institutions, was menaced by one ever-darkening shadow: the growth of population. The facts of the English industrial revolution, though he had never observed them at first hand, now really first came home to him. This was true even before the "Defection": it may even have been one of the causes of it. Too many people to feed; too many people to house; too many people to civilize. From 1815 to 1836 the number of landless squatters in Sweden rose by 46% — a rate more than double that of the population as a whole. And there was no place for these newcomers within the existing system. Geijer was moved to write urgent articles on the problems of poverty, which provided the information and the stimulus for the social reforms which his pupil, Prince Oscar, strove to organize. What was needed, they both thought, was thorough reform

of workhouses and prisons, more attention to public health, more and better primary education, freer trade. For these problems the middle classes seemed to have no general, considered, remedies; nor did they apparently appreciate that freedom of trade, however desirable, might demand as its corollary a measure of protection for the economically weak. As long as the old system of four Estates survived, sufficiently radical legislation was improbable: what was needed was a broad franchise and some new form of legislature. As he neared the end of his life Geijer began to think that there might be hope in "the principle of association", as developed in the co-operative movement. In his last years he seems to have borrowed ideas from the work of Lorenz von Stern, who in some respects has been considered as clearly pointing the way to Marx. At all events, he made up his mind that doctrinaire Liberalism was no more a final solution than Tory compassion.

He did not live long enough to follow up these new ideas. Latterly he had been increasingly isolated, for both sides regarded him with understandable suspicion. For a time he even forfeited the homage of his Uppsala undergraduates by forbidding, at the king's behest, their participation in the great rally of Scandinavian students in Copenhagen. He might hope that the new king, Oscar I, would carry through the social reforms which both of them dreamed of; but he was not to know that after a brave beginning Oscar turned out after all to be something of a Frederick William IV. At all events, the struggle must be left to others. His health was breaking, and in 1846 he left Uppsala for Stockholm, amid the moving tributes and visible grief of the now-reconciled student body. He died in the following year. His prestige was still undimmed, far beyond that of any comparable English academic. For his formidable personality had dominated the academic world in a country where the academic world still counted for much. And though jealous colleagues after his death made sour comments on the large pensions he drew, and the substantial grants he was given, to finish the two major works which he made little serious attempt to complete, posterity — even English posterity — may feel that he earned his green postage stamp.

## Notes

1. The primary sources upon which this essay are based are: Erik Gustaf Geijer, *Minnen. Utdrag ur brev och dagböcker* (Stockholm 1834; new edn. 1929); *Erik Gustaf Geijers brev till hans hustru 1808—1846*, ed. John Landquist (Stockholm 1923); Anton Blanck, *Geijer i England 1809—1810. En biografisk studie på grundvalen af bref och dagboksanteckningar* (Stockholm 1914); Anna Hamilton Geete, *I solnedgången. Minnen och bilder från Erik Gustaf Geijers senaste levnadsår*, I—IV (Stockholm 1910—1914). A biography covering all aspects of his life and work is John Landquist, *Erik Gustaf Geijer. Hans lefnad och verk* (Stockholm 1924). Slighter but suggestive is Lydia Wahlström, *Erik Gustaf Geijer. En lefnadsteckning* (Stockholm 1907). His career as a politician is covered in Carl Arvid Hessler, *Geijer som politiker*, I—II (Stockholm 1937, 1947); and see Edvard Rodhe, *Geijer och samhället. En Studie i Svensk Tradition* (Stockholm 1942). For Geijer as a historian, Gustaf Jacobson, *Från Geijer till Hjärne. Studier i svensk historieskrivning under 1800-talet*, and more recently Bengt Henningsson, *Geijer som historiker* (Uppsala 1961). For Geijer as a musician, T. Nordlind, *Geijer som musiker* (Stockholm 1919).
2. *Vide* Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*. Chapter LI.
3. For Thorild, see *Thomas Thorilds brev* del, ed. Lauritz Weibull (Uppsala 1902), III, 175, 177.
4. For Franzén's English experiences, Franz Michael Franzén, *Resedagbok 1795—1796* ed. Anders Hernmarck (Stockholm 1977).
5. Franzén had made the same observation: *Resejournal*, pp. 131 *seqq.*
6. Franzén was more appreciative, perhaps influenced by the fact that a don whom he met casually in the High invited him to dine in Magdalen. He reported (very much to the College's credit) that the dinner was "modest, with little wine, and no academic discourse".
7. *Resejournal*, p. 175. "Windsor" (he wrote on another occasion) "is not at all built on such straight lines as Versailles — but it is indescribably clean" (*ib.* p. 211). So much for Versailles.
8. The precedent had been established by George II.
9. From Handel's last oratorio, *Jephtha*.
10. Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*, p. 108.
11. Riots by the theatre-going public to protest against an increase in price of tickets, and to demand the restoration of the *Old Prices*.
12. This was not quite the first attempt at blank verse drama in Swedish: Franzén began, but never finished, a tragedy in blank verse.
13. John Landquist, *Erik Gustaf Geijer. Hans Lefnad och Verk* (Stockholm 1924), p. 71.
14. It was in 1817, in a treatise on *Feudalism and Republicanism*, that this observation on 1688 first appeared. The treatise in fact dealt mainly — as far as it went — with the English constitution. It was never finished.
15. The recently-built and greatly-admired Iron Bridge over the Severn.
16. For the circumstances of his election to the chair, see Henrik Schück, *Svenska Bilder*, (Stockholm 1941) VII, 284 *seqq.*
17. The Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford.
18. A selection of his historical lectures is available in *Ur Erik Gustaf Geijers historiska föreläsningar*, ed A. Blank (Stockholm 1948).