

Chapter 33 : “For Science & the Arts”

CG is the patron of six royal academies: The Academy of Free Arts, the Academy of Engineering Sciences, the Academy of War Sciences, the Academy of Music, the Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Learning, History and Antiquities. Not forgetting the flagship, the Swedish Academy (of Literature). The CG is not involved in its day-to-day activities but has the right of attendance and approves the election of the members, the 18. The Swedish Academy's official motto was “For Talent and Taste”. For the 68s it was “Waste and Distaste” as below. From the turn of the millennium, some of the academies have participated in a series of seminars “The Crown of Knowledge” on various themes in the Bernadotte Library at the castle which has been broadcast on television. The atmosphere during the seminar is strange, solemn, almost sacred. An overhead or an interjection from the auditorium would be treason.

Two of the academies, the Swedish Academy and the Academy of Sciences, choose annual Nobel Prize winners in literature, physics, chemistry and economic science respectively. (The winner of the Nobel Prize in Medicine is appointed by the Nobel Assembly at Karolinska Institutet, the Nobel Peace Prize winner of the Norwegian Nobel Committee.) The prizes were first awarded in 1901, the economic prize in 1969, and have since 1902 been awarded by the kings of Sweden. To the extent that CG is known by common people abroad, it is for awarding the Nobel Prize. The award ceremony takes place on 10 December, the death of Alfred Nobel, in the Stockholm Concert Hall with a subsequent banquet at the City Hall. The winners are also invited to a formal dinner at the castle. For the 75th anniversary, there were 76 laureates invited to the dinner. For the 90th anniversary, it was 130. Hard to hold your own in that congregation. CG and Silvia get to bask in their brilliance however.

The Nobel Prize is the world's most prestigious prize and the backing of official Sweden is massive. You definitely get your fill of party dresses and seeing people eat well in the TV broadcasts of the banquet. No criticism is allowed but...

Gert Fylking, now a journalist, has made himself spokesman for the academy-haters: “The Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy opens his door at exactly 1 p.m. and announces who has received the Nobel Prize in Literature. In October 2000, the prize went to a completely unknown Chinese named Gao Xingjian. Everyone is silent except for Gert Fylking who exclaims in a clear voice: Finally! A cry that summarized exactly what everyone felt.”¹ Fylking tried to make it a tradition. In 2001 he was stopped by the doorkeepers, in 2002 he was prepared, disguised in a false nose, exclaimed his “Finally!” (it was Imre Kertész this time), tried to lead the journalists in a hurrah choir and finally pushed forward with his cameraman for an interview with Permanent Secretary Horace Engdahl: “We have talked to your old classmate Christer Pettersson [suspected of the murder of Olov Palme], and he claims that his essays in school were much better than yours. What is your comment on that?” This caused the Academy to ban Fylking for life.²

In 2009, freelance journalist Linda Leopold was blacklisted by Dagens Nyheter's editor-in-chief, Gunilla Herlitz, after writing derogatory about guests' gala clothes: Silvia had “draped herself in Drottningholm's curtains”, Princess Madeleine “could be confused with a spruce” and the literature laureate Hertha Müller was “the most

¹ Bengt Eriksson. Artikel om Gert Fylking. [Hundtidning], 2007:2, s 22-24.

² Horace Engdahl. Därför är Gert Fylking portad. Sourze, 2002-10-14.

beautiful thing to come from Romania since Dracula”. On the mark, but the readers complained.

Since the prize is awarded so late in the laureates' career, it is almost posthumous and has no effect on their production. Literary laureates in particular are said to have seen it as an end-point and to have suffered from writer's block. The truth, however, seems to be that many of them were by then rather doddering and/or alcoholic. In 1962, the Swedish Academy actually managed to ban Swedish film technicians from working with an American film that made a joke about the matter. The Academy's short fuse seems also to have been related to the fact that the prize up to 1953 declined considerably in value. The reason was that the capital was long invested in government bonds that did not even keep pace with inflation. In 1901, the prize money was 7.5 million euros, in 1951 it was 2.5 million and in 2001 it was 10 million. A large part of the recovery was due to Stig Ramel, who 1972-1992 was CEO of the Nobel Foundation.

Over the years, Scandinavians and, in particular, Swedes, are said to have received serious favours. In 1974, for example, the Swedish Academy awarded the literature prize to two of its own members, Harry Martinsson and Eyvind Johnson, which caused a great deal of ridicule. The main critic was the writer Sven Delblanc: What remains of the Nobel Prize's international prestige will be swept away by it making a laughing-stock of itself. It was pure corruption. “Peer admiration is one thing, but this smells almost like embezzlement.”³ The effect of the is supposed to have been that Johnson completely stopped writing and after two years died and that Martinsson became so depressed that he killed himself. The reputation of both took a beating. Like Heidenstam, however, they seem to me rather to have been the victims of a literary feud with leftist political significance. In the early 1980s, it could still sound like this: “How could I possibly take an interest in Eyvind Johnson? He's so passé! A moldy, bourgeois writer! A class traitor! A deserter! Some of the more revolutionary scholars believed that his Nobel Prize was the reward for badmouthing the Swedish working class.”⁴

Another feud on the subject of the Academy's moral cowardice is the Rushdi conflict of 1989, of which there are two versions. Permanent Secretary Sture Allén claimed that it was a pretext for his fellow contestant Lars Gyllensten and his protégé Kerstin Ekman to withdraw when Gyllensten was not elected secretary in 1986. According to them, it was the political cowardice of the Academy members to refuse to condemn the Iranian mullahs that made the atmosphere unbearable. The feud is periodically aired, Ekman is always willing.

The conflicts between the Swedish Academy and the “left establishment” may be seen as a simultaneous attack on CG, the bourgeoisie and state power in general, since the Nobel solemnities is a high-bourgeois manifestation, one of the few remaining. But it is also a protest against CG's disinterest in the humanities, his knowledge of it is so bad that people feel provoked: “An ambitious reporter [during a state visit to Russia in 2001] inadvertently disgraces by putting a well-intentioned question: Many people believe that the Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer deserves the Nobel Prize. What does the king think of that? Silence. Panic among the underlings. The King takes a sip of Russian mineral water and clears his

³ Sven Delblanc. Ett katastrofalt beslut. Expressen, 1974-10-03.

⁴ Björn Gustavsson. Sven Delblanc och nobelpriset i litteratur 1974. Dalademokraten 2010-11-25.

throat before answering: Tomas who?“⁵ When Tranströmer 2011 was actually awarded the Nobel Prize, the academic criticism continued - this time voiced by Jan Guillou: “No Swede can receive the Nobel Prize after Eyvind Johnson and Harry Martinsson shared it, that embarrassment is still very deep.”⁶

The first time CG awarded the Nobel Prize was in 1972 when King Gustaf VI was too sickly and depressed by Sibylla's funeral three days earlier to do it himself. CG's light hearted style was well received by the assembly. The following year, he made sure the ceremonial was changed accordingly: cheerful music and a slightly freer placement of the spectators. CG carefully rehearsed his role in the spectacle.

Since 1982, CG has also awarded the Craaford Prize of the Academy of Sciences for topics outside the Nobel Prize: astronomy, earth science, life sciences (primarily ecology) and mathematics. And since 1992 the Polar Prize. This was originally intended as a Nobel Prize in music but has had difficulty asserting itself. Critics claim that it has become more a reward for long and loyal service in the music industry. Surprises are called for. A little unfair since the Nobel Prize per definition is a reward for long service in the knowledge industry as well as for striking a mother lode.

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Gustaf VI and later CG were, according to tradition, patrons of the Academy of Sciences. Gustaf VI, with his humanist interests in archaeology and the arts, felt more at home in the Academy of Learning, History and Antiquities. CG chose the Academy of Sciences. In the spring of 1972 he attended the Academy's formal gathering in the House of Nobility. The Academy's secretary Carl Gustaf Bernhard (1910-2001) adopted a sophomoric tone in the greeting speech that he hoped would make CG feel welcome:

Mr. Bernadotte, Assembly of Honour. The likelihood of a Swedish citizen becoming an honorary member of this discerning academy is minimal. For this to happen, the celestial constellations, which we could read about in the Academy's by the governments now declared dead almanac, must be quite special. That is, I am glad to say, the case this year. As the Academy now welcomes you, Mr. Bernadotte, she remembers how your great-grandfather 150 years ago followed the development of Berzelian chemistry. We cannot offer new elements in Berzelii's sense, but instead we can offer new elementary particles, exciting space phenomena, genetic codes, biological development processes and ecological balances, as this year's prizes reminds us. With these allures, the Academy of Sciences, warmly welcomes Mr. Bernadotte to her events.⁷

CG stepped up to the podium and looked out over all the graying notabilities who wondered how he would react. CG searched his pocket for the speech. He looked very young and very insecure but... “Just in case I have brought two speeches, one which is solemn, but, finding everybody in a good mode I'll take the second speech instead!” - “The young speaker then simply ignored the print and heedlessly threw himself into the situation. An impromptu,

⁵ Fredrik Wilkingsson & Filip Hammar. Kungen. Magasinet Bon, 2002:1, s 131-138.

⁶ Pascal Engman. Jan Guillou tycker till. Nöjesguiden, 2011-10-06.

⁷ Carl Gunnar Bernhard. Huset på höjden. 2000.

relaxed, youthful and natural speech brought him sincere applause. A perfect debut in the Academy!”⁸

During the banquet the academy learned during that CG's main scientific interest was nature and environment, i.e. the biological sciences, and changed their activities to accommodate him. CG used to attend the joint meetings every second Wednesday, although some of the lectures gave him a rather haunted look. “We have the feeling that the King regards us as 'his' academy and of course we are pleased of that,” says Secretary CG Bernhard. After the presentations, he usually lingers for informal discussions.”⁹ Over time he got to know the Swedish research community. He visited their institutions and interrogated their grunts about virtually everything. Mr. and Mrs. Bernhard several times invited CG and Silvia to dinner with promising young scientists. “There are often fun discussions. Of course, his knowledge of the field is limited, but he sure can socialize with scientists.”¹⁰ At his accession, CG let strike a medal “Pro mundo habitabile” - for a habitable world - known as Carl XVI Gustaf's medal. It is awarded for outstanding achievements in environmental research and in conservation. On his state visits and tours CG has given a prominent place to scientific research and academic collaboration. In 1976, he made parts of Ulriksdal castle available to the International Federation of Institutes for Advanced Study (IFIAS) under Associate Professor Sam Nilsson, who has a loose connection to the Nobel Movement.

CG wasn't just interested in biology. One of the academy's initiatives was the Swedish Vacuum Solar Telescope SVST on the Roque de los Muchachos mountain, Las Palmas. It also moved smaller star telescopes there with previous placement at Capri. They were part of a group of telescopes inaugurated by King Juan Carlos on June 28-29, 1985. The event clashed with Tage Erlander's funeral, which Prince Bertil was supposed to attend, but he was ill. In the choice between disappointing the Social Democrats or the Academy of Sciences, CG chose to participate in the inauguration of the telescopes. It was criticized in the newspapers. CG referred to old promises but the Academy secretary had a better explanation: “This clash between the king's interests and his political duties perhaps only shows that the king, when it comes to the crunch, would rather spend his time in areas where he is appreciated.”¹¹

CG is the first king to have devoted the Academy of Sciences more than a passing interest. Possibly the efforts of the Academy of Sciences gave him two honorary doctorates: Ultuna 1985 and Åbo Academy 1990.

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In 1983, Prince Bertil was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Royal Institute of Technology in recognition of his contributions to Swedish industry. Mainly the sales trips to North and South America, Africa, Asia etc. By then he was so old that the Academy of Engineering Sciences wanted CG to take over. Since 1984, CG and IVA have organised what is known as the Royal Technology Missions. These are not sales trips as under Prince Bertil but industry delegations of 15-30 high level Swedish business leaders, government officials and university representatives. Also budding abilities participate. The aim is to establish contacts that can lead to a longer term exchange of ideas and business. The trips take place

⁸ Carl Gunnar Bernhard. Huset på höjden. 2000.

⁹ Ett år med kungen. Svenska Dagbladet, 1974-09-08.

¹⁰ Ann-Marie Åsheden. Våran kung: del 4. Dagens Nyheter 1985-12-29.

¹¹ Ann-Marie Åsheden. Våran kung: del 4. Dagens Nyheter 1985-12-29.

every 1.5 or 2 years and are one week long. They have gone to Japan, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, South Korea, South Africa, Brazil and India. By 2013, 21 countries. CG's participation acts as a door opener. Participants describe him as well-versed in all technical issues, energetic and keen for the delegation to benefit from the occasion.¹² To the extent that he has a position of his own, it is to revitalize old Swedish tradition with new technology.

His first trip in March 1984 was to Silicon Valley, California. The company travelled in a motorcade. First the motorcycle officers, then CG in a black Oldsmobil, the directors in two worn down Ford buses singing their heads off and at the end the Swedish Consul General in a cream-coloured Rolls-Royce. CG's chief of staff Stig Synnergren led the directors' morning gymnastics. CG also wanted them to join the evening gymnastics = disco but they weren't up to it. "At Stanford University, they listened to one of the world's foremost experts on visual thinking, Robert McKim. He let the Swedish delegation imagine that they were animals on a farm early in the morning. The king was appointed sheep, and was supposed to bleat and say bäh. [The others] were cows, hens and turkeys. They glanced nervously at the bleating king before themselves starting to moo and cackles. The purpose of the exercise: to illustrate the biggest obstacle to creative thinking - the fear of making a fool of oneself."¹³ - "Bo Berggren, CEO of Stora, was on the IVA trip to Silicon Valley. He was amazed at the effect of a king abroad. "To experience how doors open is very strange. And the doors are really being opened, the companies are making great efforts to provide us with interesting information. During these trips, where the king is not challenged, where he feels he is useful as a door opener and appreciated, he's a completely different person than in official contexts at home. Both relaxed and sure of himself. On the IVA delegation's visit to Stanford University, it is reported that he gave a brilliant speech. - It is hard to take in that he is the same person who stutters his address at the opening of the Parliament. There is a difference between what you love to do and what you have to do, says one who heard the speech."¹⁴

Later, the protocol has been further relaxed and CG travels in the bus with the others: "Royal technology mission is a curious conducted tour where the elite of the Swedish business community socialize in order to learn more about the country being visited, make contacts and tell about Swedish engineering. Politics is banned and in China [November 2010] neither human rights nor the Nobel Peace Prize is mentioned."¹⁵ However, the Protocol is not completely abolished. The seats near CG are awarded by lot. It is probably these industrial delegations that in 1989 made CG an honorary doctor at the Royal Institute of Technology.

In 2002 a short IVA trip of two days was made to Blekinge and in 2011 a corresponding trip to Småland. CG saw the trip as a follow-up to his tours in the 1960s. The trips are supposed to replace the county and municipal visits. CG believes that there is as much to learn from Sweden as from abroad. There is a statement that IVA writes reports on the trips and that these are handed over to the government and have an influence on business issues.¹⁶ CG otherwise seems strangely reactive in his industrial contacts. IVA claims, for example, that the first time that the court itself contacted a company for a visit was not until 1998 with Ecolan AB in Helsingborg, a company that had developed an environmentally friendly

¹² Göran Blomé. Bästa Sverige - Från vikingavälde till EU-monarki. Gullers, 2007.

¹³ Veckans affärer, 1984-03-29.

¹⁴ Ann-Marie Åsheden. Våran kung: del 3. Dagens Nyheter 1985-12-27.

¹⁵ Fredrik Sjöshult. En nyfiken monark på strålande humör. Expressen, 2010-11-15.

¹⁶ Björn O Nilsson, IVA, 2011.

method of packaging.¹⁷ CG's inaction has been criticized. I will revert to the criticism in a later chapter.

CG also awards “industrial” prizes: Count Carl Bernadotte's Forest Prize “for citizens who have contributed to the forestry industry”, His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf's Prize for “Homesteader of the Year” (an immigrant who has started his own business) and the Marcus Wallenberg Prize “for researchers and technicians who have made contributions in the forestry sector”. (This prize, two million, is awarded to individual researchers or smaller groups. Every year, around 500 organizations around the world are invited to nominate candidates.) Since 1990, he has presented the Stockholm Water Prize to support R&D in the field, \$150 thousand and a crystal sculpture awarded at Stockholm City Hall. IVA, Stockholm City and others donate the prize money.

CG also has several old foundations in the field of medicine, dating from Oscar II on, but is not personally involved in them. However, he is involved in the “King Gustaf VI Adolf's Fund for Swedish Culture”, a merger of three collections on behalf of Gustaf VI's 70th, 80th and 90th birthday. In 2009, the university awarded SEK 6.7 million in grants for various types of humanities research and caring for the cultural heritage.

Finally, CG appoints court singers and (from 1990) also court dancers, but no court poets.

¹⁷ Göran Blomé. Bästa Sverige - Från vikingavälde till EU-monarki. Gullers, 2007.