

# Samlaren

Tidskrift för forskning om  
svensk och annan nordisk litteratur  
Årgång 136 2015

*I distribution:*  
Swedish Science Press

Svenska Litteratursällskapet

## REDAKTIONSKOMMITTÉ:

*Berkeley:* Linda Rugg

*Göteborg:* Lisbeth Larsson

*Köpenhamn:* Johnny Kondrup

*Lund:* Erik Hedling, Eva Hættner Aurelius

*München:* Annegret Heitmann

*Oslo:* Elisabeth Oxfeldt

*Stockholm:* Anders Cullhed, Anders Olsson, Boel Westin

*Tartu:* Daniel Sävborg

*Uppsala:* Torsten Petterson, Johan Svedjedal

*Zürich:* Klaus Müller-Wille

*Åbo:* Claes Ahlund

*Redaktörer:* Jon Viklund (uppsatser) och Andreas Hedberg (recensioner)

*Biträdande redaktör:* Ljubica Miočević

*Inlagans typografi:* Anders Svedin

Utgiven med stöd av

*Svenska Akademien och Vetenskapsrådet*

Bidrag till *Samlaren* insändes digitalt i ordbehandlingsprogrammet Word till [info@svelitt.se](mailto:info@svelitt.se). Konsultera skribentinstruktionerna på sällskapets hemsida innan du skickar in. Sista inlämningsdatum för uppsatser till nästa årgång av *Samlaren* är 15 juni 2016 och för recensioner 1 september 2016. *Samlaren* publiceras även digitalt, varför den som sänder in material till *Samlaren* därmed anses medge digital publicering. Den digitala utgåvan nås på: <http://www.svelitt.se/samlaren/index.html>. Sällskapet avser att kontinuerligt tillgängliggöra även äldre årgångar av tidskriften.

Svenska Litteratursällskapet tackar de personer som under det senaste året ställt sig till förfogande som bedömare av inkomna manuskript.

Svenska Litteratursällskapet PG: 5367–8.

Svenska Litteratursällskapets hemsida kan nås via adressen [www.svelitt.se](http://www.svelitt.se).

ISBN 978–91–87666–35–3

ISSN 0348–6133

Printed in Lithuania by  
Balto print, Vilnius 2016

han att han inte fick andas inne hos Sackéusas. Då öppnade han dörren och sprang rätt ut i sommaren.” (97). Exemplet visar alltså inte riktigt på den rationalitet som avhandlingen hävdar.

Analysen av andra passager från samma avsnitt i romanen framstår i mina ögon som övertolkningar. Enligt avhandlingen bidrar barnet Mikaelns dialog med Olle och hans mor till klassolidaritet (191 f.). Men klassolidaritet tycks mig för starkt. Det är ju främst kompisskapet som handlar om: Olles gladlythet och intelligens framhålls och just det gör umgänget trevligt och underhållande. Vidare hävdas att Mikaelns undran över hur lungsoten kan vara förbunden med en blå slöja ger uttryck för tvivel på de vuxnas förklaringar. Men den blåa slöjan är knuten till Mikaelns synfält och inget som de vuxna sagt (*Godnatt, jord*, 93 f.). Att barnet just genom umgänget med Olle dessutom skulle visa sig vara en bättre människa än de vuxna är nog också att ta i. Allt som här hävdas kan diskuteras, men avhandlingen hävdar sin ståndpunkt som absolut: att det förhåller sig så står klart för läsaren utan att berättaren kommenterar sammanhangen (192).

Sandra Mischliwicz avhandling är ett överflödande rikt och mångfacetterat arbete, både teoretiskt, metodiskt och innehållsligt. Den huvudkritik jag anfört baserar sig till stor del på detta överflöd. Hur imponerande detta stora arbete än är, så lider det i flera avseenden av bristande överskådlighet och stringens. I stället för en eller ett par starka frågeställningar som kunde driva avhandlingen och ge en klar argumentationslinje, så presenteras en hel arsenal av både teser och frågor, som bara ofullständigt kan behandlas. Undersökningens resultat förblir därför något oklart. Jag har också vissa invändningar mot de teoretiska perspektiv som anläggs, både vad gäller antal och i sak. Slutligen kan också vissa anakronistiska och tidsmässigt oklara tendenser noteras i avhandlingens historiska framställning.

Dessa kritiska synpunkter får dock inte skymma den stora insats som Mischliwicz avhandling innebär för arbetarlitteraturen och arbetarlitteraturforskningen. Till skillnad från mycken annan forskning på området ger den ny och betydande kunskap om just de litterära texterna och sätter in dem i idéhistoriska och sociala sammanhang, som ofta är klagörande. Själva utgångspunkten med barnet som sinnebild eller ställföreträdare för arbetaren och arbetarförfattaren är fyndig, kreativ och tänkvärd. Avhandlingen är också skriven med ett

engagemang och ett forskarnit utöver det vanliga, åtminstone i Sverige. Det återstår bara att önska författaren lycka till med förhoppning om fortsatta forskningar.

Beata Agrell

Henrik Otterberg, *Alma Natura, Ars Severa. Expanses & Limits of Craft in Henry David Thoreau* (Dissertations defended at the Department of Literature, History of Ideas & Religion, University of Gothenburg, 39). Institutionen för litteratur, idéhistoria och religion, Göteborgs universitet. Göteborg 2014.

In 19<sup>th</sup>-century America, the literary stature of Henry David Thoreau was far overshadowed by that of his tutor Ralph Waldo Emerson. In our own time, however, their respective importance has in many ways been reversed, spurred in part by Thoreau's deep environmental concerns. In the last three decades in particular, numerous scholarly books and articles have been devoted to Thoreau's works. Thoreau has become the focus of a recent doctoral thesis in Sweden as well, namely Henrik Otterberg's *Alma Natura, Ars Severa: Expanses & Limits of Craft in Henry David Thoreau*. Otterberg's dissertation may be seen as a rather daunting endeavor, as the study of Thoreau's works today has become a densely plowed academic field. In my view, Otterberg's monograph nonetheless manages to pursue interesting perspectives that have received modest attention from other Thoreau scholars.

The main body of Otterberg's dissertation consists of six chapters, all of them articles on Thoreau that Otterberg has published over a period of 17 years between 1997 and 2014. In his extensive, nearly 60-page introduction to these articles, Otterberg provides a general overview of major scholarly positions on Thoreau's work, presents the primary theses of his own study, and sketches out his main theoretical inroads to the analysis of Thoreau's texts. In the latter part of the "Introduction" Otterberg also comments on each of his article chapters, situating them, post-facto as it were, within the intrinsic discourse of the dissertation as a whole.

The order in which the articles appear in the dissertation reflects, by and large, the historical-chronological order in which Thoreau wrote the texts

that are the objects of Otterberg's analyses. Thus Otterberg's first article deals with the early essay by Thoreau called "A Winter Walk". The next article, Chapter 2, "Henry Thoreau and the Advent of American Rail," discusses Thoreau's attitudes to this epitome of American 19<sup>th</sup>-century technology and industrialism. The two articles that follow, Chapters 3 and 4, constitute in many ways the centerpieces of Otterberg's dissertation. They are entitled, respectively, "Tenth Muse Errant: On Thoreau's Crisis of Technology and Language" and "Hound, Bay Horse, and Turtle-Dove: Obscurity and Authority in Thoreau's *Walden*." Both pieces focus to a large extent on the text of *Walden*, particularly on how developments in 19<sup>th</sup>-century American history and culture affected the writing, the language, of Thoreau's best-known single work. And the penultimate chapter, entitled "Character and Nature: Towards an Aristotelian Understanding of Thoreau's Literary Portraits and Environmental Poetics," goes on to discuss the type of observations of nature that characterized Thoreau's *post-Walden* writings in particular. The last piece of Otterberg's anthology of articles, "Chapter 6: Figuring Henry: Thoreau's Autobiographical Accounts in *Walden*," is the only one that does not quite fit into such a chronological-sequential pattern, since Otterberg here goes back to examining *Walden* again. The predominant focus in this article on *Walden* as autobiography, however, may be said to serve as a fitting conclusion to Otterberg's study, since his dissertation has continuously been preoccupied with the extensive self-presentation that makes Thoreau's entire oeuvre into a life narrative.

The sequential order of these article chapters serves to highlight a central concern of Otterberg's dissertation, namely the development that can be traced throughout Thoreau's writing – thematically, aesthetically, and rhetorically. Although each article is self-contained, their collective, evolutionary structure allows Otterberg to point to important changes in Thoreau's philosophy of nature: from an early, predominant preoccupation with transcendence to an increasing concern with immanence; from an anthropocentric perspective to a more biocentric orientation; and from a predominantly, in Otterberg's words, "echo-logical" conception of nature (seeing nature's divinity and the human ideal self as reiterations of one another) to a more *ecological* vision of it (seeing outward nature as a system in itself apart from human culture).

At the same time, however, Otterberg is very careful to note the complexity involved in Thoreau's intellectual journey; he sees Thoreau's development more as a matter of increasing tendencies rather than some irrevocable change of worldview. Thoreau's concern with transcendental and anthropocentric perspectives is, as Otterberg notes in several instances, found throughout his works, but it nonetheless assumes more moderate forms in his later writings. An even more important caveat, perhaps: Otterberg does not see Thoreau's struggle with these ideas as a mere "from-this-to-that" development; he sees these contrary ideas as constituting a dialectical interplay throughout Thoreau's life work.

Otterberg's focus, throughout his dissertation, on the manifold and tension-filled character of Thoreau's intellectual trajectory is easily demonstrated by linking his first article to his penultimate one. In contradistinction to most Thoreau scholars who have found Thoreau's essay "A Winter Walk" to give expression to an Emersonian, idealistic Transcendentalism, Otterberg argues that it *also* concerns itself with more naturalistic perspectives, revealing what he calls "Thoreau's nascent proto-ecological interest" (35). Otterberg's penultimate chapter on Thoreau's increasing gravitation towards an Aristotelian understanding of his environment returns to these issues, and demonstrates that Thoreau in his later writings became increasingly preoccupied with collecting vast catalogs of nature, with assembling enormous numbers of empirical, minute, accumulated observations of natural phenomena in order to identify nature's typical and probable processes and laws; in short, that he gravitated more towards what we today would call an ecocentric consciousness.

My summary so far seems to indicate that Otterberg is exclusively focused the evolution of Thoreau's environmental awareness, but this is by no means the case. The middle sections of Otterberg's thesis, its centerpieces, are instead largely concerned with a topic that is only tangentially related to environmental questions, namely the problems of style that Thoreau struggled with in his attempt to convey external nature in a truthful manner. Particularly interesting in this connection is Otterberg's argument that Thoreau's struggle with language made him use rhetorical means not only in the service of perspicuity but also in the service of obscurity. A striking feature of Otterberg's dis-

sertation is its strong desire to link the issue of Thoreau's struggles with language to the sociocultural context of 19<sup>th</sup>-century America. Otterberg regards Thoreau's texts as being fundamentally shaped by their historical context *and* by the biographical person who wrote them. In addition Otterberg's continuously makes use of a reader-response perspective; his literary analyses also take into account Thoreau's reception among his 19<sup>th</sup>-, 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century interpreters and critics. If we make use of a "sender–message–receiver" model of communication adapted to textual narrative, we find that Otterberg's thesis pays attention to all its major components: the sociocultural context of the text in question; its historical author (Thoreau); the formal and thematic structures of the text itself; the role of its narrator; the responses of its readers; and the latter's historical situatedness.

With regard to the last point, Otterberg argues convincingly that modern readers of Thoreau must avoid the fallacy of anachronism, of for instance attributing to Thoreau modern ideas and insights that he could not possibly have entertained in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or criticizing him for lacking such modern insights. One of the most dominant features of Otterberg's endeavors is at the same time his extensive and painstaking concern with the reception history of the text or texts he examines – on how readers (frequently other scholars) have interpreted them. This reception history takes for the most part place in his copious notes. A large part of my study of Otterberg's thesis has consisted in leafing back and forth between the body text of his articles and their endnotes. In his essay "Tenth Muse Errant: On Thoreau's Crisis of Technology and Language," for instance, the notes come as densely as hail and embody very close to a third of the entire essay's bulk. His notes usually serve a much more extensive function than to merely provide bibliographical information. They are sites of expository explication and interpretive debate, and frequently contain multiple cross-references to a host of secondary sources on the topic in question. The discussion that goes on in some notes is arguably so seminal that it might instead have been incorporated into the running text itself in order to serve Otterberg's primary discourse more visibly and effectively. Nonetheless Otterberg's use of notes is an organic part of his scholarly *style*, as it were – in a truly Thoreauvian sense. His dissertation is carried out on two levels: there is the mainstream of his general arguments, and underneath

that, in his notes, one finds multiple undercurrents of sub-discussions and nitty-gritty details of scholarly dispute. Although Otterberg's reader may find the absence of a complete bibliography at the end of the dissertation to be a shortcoming, his formal notation apparatus testifies to the meticulousness and the wide range of his scholarship.

A close reading of Thoreau's own works is nonetheless at the center of Otterberg's analytical venture. Otterberg's dissertation pays primary attention, first, to the intrinsic discourse of the texts themselves and, secondly, to their relationship to their socio-cultural context as well as to their author. Otterberg's strong concern with the text itself is reflected in his distinction, borrowed from anthropology, between an emic and an etic procedure. An emic portrayal involves writing from the point of view of the subject one studies, which in Otterberg's case are the Thoreauvian texts themselves; an etic portrayal means writing from the perspective of the observer/interpreter him- or herself. A closely related opposition that Otterberg's dissertation has been inspired by and makes use of, is the distinction established by the Geneva school of criticism between one's "unquestionable immersion" in the text and one's inquisitive suspicion of it, one's judgment of it. His study of Thoreau's texts thus represents continuous attempts to mediate between sympathetic and critical modes of reading.

When linked to his poststructuralist conception of language and style, however, Otterberg's desire to combine immersive (sympathetic, emic) and distanced (critical, etic) readings of Thoreau produces some theoretical quandaries that remain unresolved, particularly in his "Introduction." On the one hand, Otterberg clearly considers emic immersion into the text a prerequisite for his literary study. On the other hand, however, his analysis of Thoreau's texts proclaims a relatively strong allegiance to poststructuralist ideas of linguistic discourse and writing, according to which language is per se unable to provide a true, mimetic representation of experience. Thus Otterberg's own pursuit of an emic description of Thoreau's texts may – according to the very (post-structuralist) views of language that he adheres to – be seen to represent an analytical misstep, as the interpreter's language and worldview will inevitably color his desire, however sincere, to write from his subject's point of view. Such theoretical discrepancies could perhaps have been more directly addressed in Otterberg's

introductory sections on “Theoretical & methodological considerations” and “Coda.” In my view, the tensions that arise between emic immersion and etic distance in Otterberg’s writing on Thoreau may in some way be argued to be analogous to the conflict between representation and construction that he himself finds in Thoreau’s writing on nature.

The tensions inherent in Otterberg’s own approaches to Thoreau come for instance to the fore in his article on “Thoreau’s Crisis of Technology and Language,” when he observes that

[...] there is a play in *Walden*, and especially an undercurrent in “Sounds,” that runs against the generally triumphant tone of its narrator. The transparent language he strives for proves a mirage. “The vanishing point,” as Adorno adds of our rationality, “is the insight that nature ... cannot be copied” (*Aesthetic Theory*, 67). I would suggest that Thoreau verges on this realization in *Walden*, although his narrative voice stubbornly refuses to succumb to its implications. Only later could he openly confide such a possibility to his journal. On October 14, 1857, a sentence reads: “I doubt if you can ever get Nature to repeat herself exactly.” (152)

At the beginning of this short passage, Otterberg argues (in the spirit of poststructuralism) that Thoreau’s conception of a language that could truthfully mirror nature is in itself an illusion, but in my view his quotation from Thoreau’s journal at the end of the passage (to the effect that nature cannot be copied *exactly*) does not at all illustrate that Thoreau’s struggle for mimesis is a mirage; instead Thoreau may here be argued to suggest that writing involves *both* imitation and construction, both direct immersion and inescapable distance. In my opinion, Otterberg’s formulations about Thoreau’s problems of style – of Thoreau’s attempts to forge lived experience into language – occasionally assume an unnecessarily absolutist tinge: “Despite his imaginative attempts of bringing nature and language together, Thoreau the *writer’s* task remains – in an absolute sense – futile. Mediation between the realms of nature and civilization may be possible, but never without compromising the integrity of the former” (Otterberg 143). Quite a few Thoreau scholars tend to pursue a more moderate line of argument, most notably perhaps Lawrence Buell in his book *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995). Here Buell speaks of the nature

writer’s “thick description of the external world”; of textual representation “as having a dual accountability to matter and to discursive mentation”; of Thoreau’s “passion for accuracy” (with specific reference to *Walden*); and of “[e]nvironmental representation’s power to invent, stylize, and dislocate while at the same time pursuing a decidedly referential project (Buell 90, 92, 96, and 99). In a dissertation that is repeatedly focused on the *dialectical* character of Thoreau’s thinking, it is somewhat surprising that Otterberg at times chooses to emphasize so strongly the unfeasibility of (Thoreau’s) linguistic representation of lived experience instead of emphasizing the possibilities of *mediation* between language and world in Thoreau’s texts. In the more recently published articles in his dissertation, however, Otterberg’s argument in this respect appears to be considerably modified: When dealing with Thoreau’s later work, he in fact argues that Thoreau gives priority to “matter” in a less than futile sense.

After having perused Otterberg’s dissertation in its entirety, the reader may be struck by the fact that its extensive “Introduction” gives more attention and priority to an ecocritical perspective than the majority of the collected articles seem to warrant. This may be connected with the fact that three of these articles were published respectively some seventeen, fifteen, and ten years ago, including the two that I have termed its “centerpieces.” Their poststructuralist conception of linguistic discourse – their overriding argument that Thoreau’s language fails in evoking *natura extensa* “truthfully” – serves, per definition so to speak, to reduce the ecological message of Thoreau’s texts. Thus the strong emphasis in Otterberg’s central articles on the limitations of Thoreau’s writerly craft may be argued to lessen the authority of Thoreau’s environmental criticism.

These minor critical observations notwithstanding, Otterberg’s strong focus on Thoreau’s linguistic and rhetorical techniques nonetheless represents the great forte of his dissertation. His thesis as a whole demonstrates that Thoreau constantly struggled with the excruciatingly difficult problem of trying to devise a language that could represent nature as truthfully as possible. Combining close reading of the language of Thoreau’s texts with extensive attention to their socio-cultural and biographical dimensions, Otterberg succeeds in important ways in bringing out the complex internal ambiguities and tensions in Thoreau’s writing (confer for instance Otterberg’s article on “Thoreau’s

Crisis of Technology and Language”; his extensive chapter on the “hound, horse, and dove” passage of *Walden*; and his last section on Thoreau’s ideas about writing and character). As Otterberg argues, Thoreau had no choice but to use a socio-culturally compromised language to depict what was already a socio-culturally compromised natural environment: The iron horse of the railroad had inevitably already affected Pegasus. To quote Otterberg, the Leo Marxian machine “is not only in the garden [...] It is also, indelibly, *in the text*” (40). It is through its strong focus on the issue of language and style that Otterberg’s dissertation goes against the grain of dominant trends of Thoreauvian scholarship and presents some of its most stimulating analyses. Otterberg argues convincingly that nature perceived and nature portrayed were in fact *not* easily compatible to Thoreau; that Thoreau the observer, and Thoreau the note-taker, the writer, did *not* merge effortlessly into each other; that he instead continuously struggled with the problems and inadequacies of language and style as means of representing the external nature of his Concord environment; and that his language, at least partially, constituted an intrusive technology in itself.

Otterberg’s doctoral dissertation represents more than an anthology of loosely connected articles. The sequence of his articles constitutes an analysis of Thoreau’s intellectual development from his early essayistic beginnings, through some of his most canonical works, to his writings late in life. As a study of Thoreau’s *oeuvre*, Otterberg’s is a scholarly work that *in itself* constitutes a well-argued whole, despite occasional inconsistencies that are due to the fact that some of these articles were written separately and years apart. In my view, Otterberg’s dissertation plows some fine furrows in sections of the field of Thoreau Studies that have *not* been much tilled before. His lines of argument may perhaps be said to involve fresh shifts in emphasis and perspective rather than the introduction of revolutionary and radically new theses, but, with a literary figure like Thoreau that has been the object of immense amounts of commentary and interpretation, these fresh insights are in themselves a considerable scholarly achievement. In addition, his monograph is a treasure-chest of cross-references to the vast body of critical studies of Thoreau: The comprehensiveness and thoroughness of Otterberg’s scholarship is impressive indeed. Henrik Otterberg’s doctoral dissertation, however, does far

more than furnish an overview of previous Thoreauvian research; it provides notable contributions of its own by virtue of its close, detailed and extensive textual analyses of Thoreau’s work.

Fredrik Chr. Brögger

Agneta Rahikainen, *Poeten och hennes apostlar. En biomytografisk analys av Edith Södergranbilden*. Finska, finskugriska och nordiska institutionen, Helsingfors universitet. Helsingfors 2014.

Avhandlingens huvudtitel *Poeten och hennes apostlar* kan läsas som en diktrad i sig. Den skapar en atmosfär och förbereder läsaren till en vandring genom ett litteraturhistoriskt landskap fyllt med berättelser, bilder och myter kring diktaren Edith Södergran (1892–1923). Rahikainen har medvetet valt ordet apostel för att beteckna personer som har åtagit sig rollen som efterföljare, lärjunge eller missionär och som har betraktat sig som Södergrans talespersoner (10). Undertiteln *En biomytografisk analys av Edith Södergranbilden* ger en klar uppfattning om avhandlingens huvudsyfte: att undersöka hur bilden av Edith Södergran konstruerades efter hennes bortgång 1923 och i synnerhet hur det faktiska levnadsloppet och den postuma mytbildningen förhåller sig till varandra.

Rahikainen undersöker hur den litteraturhistoriska Södergranbilden blev skapad av samtida, av recensenter och litteraturhistoriker. Det är en fängslande berättelse om hur nära vänner, samtida kritiker och senare etablerade litteraturhistoriker konstruerade en myt. Agneta Rahikainen har även själv gjort ett försök att ge en motbild, en faktisk bild som hon kallar en trovärdig och källkritisk tolkning, eftersom hon baserar sig på fakta, arkivforskning, dokument och artiklar. Rahikainen har nämligen inte velat basera sig på andras tolkningar, hypoteser och källor (8). Hon vill lyfta fram vad som är väsentligt, nämligen att Edith Södergran är en författare som skrev lyrik av hög kvalitet på ett eget språk – Södergranska som Rahikainen kallar det – och att hennes diktkonst fortfarande är aktuell och levande. Inledningens första mening, ”Edith Södergrans produktion är liten”, är därför verkningsfull. Den betonar det speciella hos poeten Södergran som trots den ringa produktionen har inspirerat många samtida och blivit ett objekt för litteraturhistoriskt mytskapande. Förr och nu har det alltid varit ett slags strävan efter att kunna