

Christer Ekholm, *The Nervousness Comes From Without. On the Early Works of Erik Beckman*. ISBN 91-7139-626-8. Dissertation in Swedish with a summary in English. 462 p. Department of Literature, Göteborg University, Sweden 2005. Distribution: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, www.symposion.se.

Abstract: Erik Beckman has a reputation of being a difficult author, verging on the incomprehensible. The point of departure in this study of his early writings, from the 1961 poem "Kärleksdikt under morotsträd" ("Love Poem Under Carrot-Tree") to the 1965 novel *Hertigens kartonger* (*The Duke's Cartons*) is a hermeneutic problemizing of the description of him as an unreadable writer. The underlying ambition is to uncover the generative and transtextually constructed core of ideas in this distinctive world of form.

Writing within the framework of the Swedish 'open' repertoire aesthetics of the 60's Beckman focus intently on the term usage and emerges as a writer in dialogue, engaging a given set of texts and ideas as well as an enroled reader. "Love Poem Under Carrot-Tree" establishes a critique of a specific form of confession, which via an allusion to an Ahlinian motif is associated with a Platonic view of life. Against this attitude Beckman launches a materialistic confession which lays the foundation for the 'faithlessness'-alternative critique of conventions implied throughout his work.

The readings of Beckman's first books, *Farstu* (*Vestibule*) (1963) and *Någon något* (*Somebody Something*) (1964), are presented together with his essayistic setting forth of literature as a means of generating a non-conventional reality experience. The main problem for Beckman, as for his touchstone Ahlin, is with the unreserved pledge of allegiance to ideologies. And the authorial goal is didactic: to (in an act of love) evoke an event where the reader's 'piety' is transformed into a 'double reception' awake both to the meaningful and the meaningless. However in Beckman's version this 'humor' of Ahlin-like hue brings to the fore a sanctifying relationship to the concrete and tangible, instead of a directedness toward things otherworldly.

The novel *The Duke's Cartons* is focused in the final section where, at first, the alluding use of Nietzschean and Camusian thoughts is discussed. Secondly the novel's 'non-novelistic' form is treated as a willed gesture 'musically' expressing a non-harmonizing, 'absurd' attitude. Thirdly the novel's plot is accounted for as an allegory of a tendency of modern culture which drives man away from the inescapable cycle of life. A discussion of the essential nervousness motif concludes the study. The acute disease which afflicts people subject to Platonic ideology is convention-critically posited as an internalized "We". The Beckman-text states that this nervous illness can be cured only by the "faith in life" which on several levels pervades this literary universe, where the reading "hardened ideologues" are, through the materializing language of poesy, to become merely human again.

Keywords: Erik Beckman, idea analysis, repertoire aesthetics, informalism, pragmatic poetics, critique of conventions, Platonic idealism, Lars Ahlin, the Swedish 1960's.