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*Terrain Description: On P.O. Sundman, Modernity and the Human Other*

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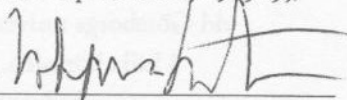
The purpose of this study is to elucidate the relationship between aesthetics, modernity and social interaction in Sundman's works. Sundman is known for his behavioristic, "objective" narrative method as linked to an epistemological, sceptical view of reality as conventionally understood. However the dissertation shows how the formal distinctiveness of Sundman's narratives prove to coincide with a critical scrutiny of modernity understood as an at once existential and social condition. The thesis' approach is textual-analytical and historical. Close readings of the texts considered as literary artefacts are related to a historical context summarized in the term *modernity*.

The examination takes as its starting-point an analysis of Sundman's two short-fiction collections *Jägarna* (*The Hunters*, 1957) and *Sökarna* (*The Searchers*, 1963). Thereafter it treats Sundman's novels *Undersökningen* (*The Investigation*, 1958), *Skytten* (*The Marksman*, 1960) and *Expeditionen* (*The Expedition*, 1962) in chronological order. These texts together display the spectrum of Sundman's critiques of modernity. The narratological analysis is concentrated upon focalization and narrator functions. Other forms of presentation studied are repetition, parataxis and deixis. The analysis lays bare complications in the mimetic aesthetics of the narratives involved, and show how Sundman's objective rhetoric functions as a legitimizing strategy. These aspects are then related to the fundamental issues of social interaction depicted in the narratives; in sum revealed as a problematic of unmotivated *giving and receiving*.

Regarding the theme of modernity, the terms rationality, bureaucracy and *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* are central to the study. The analysis on the one hand shows Sundman's texts thematizing modernity as a paradoxical phenomenon, on the other hand that precisely its paradoxical nature sheds significant light on contradictions inherent to Sundman's own authorship. The ideology criticized by Sundman is in other words simultaneously found fundamental to his own basic outlook as a writer. The struggle made evident in the texts between an authoritarian fixation upon theoretical knowledge and an open-ended giving and receiving acquires much of its tension by the ambiguity of the narration and is at length laid bare as a contradiction inherent to modernity itself. Modernity thus becomes a "formal" and "material" theme launched in Sundman's oeuvre while at the same time forming its essential prerequisite. The dissertation considers the intra-human conflicts depicted in Sundman's works as forming a complex of problems linked to modern life. Sundman's staging of unmotivated giving and receiving as a way of conceiving human relations thus appears as a comprehensively *political* figure of thought.

*Keywords:* The Swedish 1960's, *nouveau roman*, narratology, deixis, realism, parataxis, modernity, prose fiction, short fiction, *Gesellschaft-Gemeinschaft*, metonymy, authority, behaviorism, objectivity, epistemology, Robbe-Grillet, Weber, Lévinas, Wittgenstein, Genette, Riffaterre, Bauman.

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