

# En besynnerlig gemenskap

Teknologins gestalter i svensk prosa 1965-70

A Strange Community. Figures of Technology in Swedish Prose Writings 1965-70

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## Abstract

A point of departure in this thesis is the assumption that Man is intimately connected with his technological surroundings. The investigation aims to highlight these issues in the study of literary texts.

In order to further describe this human being, the study makes use of the field of cybernetics, developed by Norbert Wiener who, in 1948, coined the term. The human being outlined by Wiener is a human being always already living in a symbiotic relationship with his artifacts. In the field of Humanities, N. Katherine Hayles has taken a cybernetic, or *posthuman*, perspective in the study of the representation of Man in literary texts. Inspired by systems theory, Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman* describes a mutual exchange essential for this study – the technological discourse forms literature, and literature reflects and feeds the discourse.

The argument of the thesis is that literary texts reflect this technological – cybernetic – discourse in different ways, and that they also highlight different perspectives on Man's relation to media and technology. Thus, the "figures of technology" could be described in three categories, which also constitute the three main chapters of the study: "Protes" [Prosthesis], "System" [System], and "Automat" [Automata]. In the "Prosthesis" chapter, with Göran Palm's essay fiction book *En orättvis betraktelse* [(1966) *As Others See Us*] in focus, technology is described as an extension of the body. But how extensive can this extension of our bodies become before the user becomes himself an extension of his technological environment? This issue will be discussed under the headline "System". In this chapter the subject finds himself to be under a threatening state of dissolution. Staffan Seeberg's *Vägen genom Vasaparken* [(1970) "The Walk Through Vasa Park"], is the main example from this point of view. In the last analyzing chapter, called "Automata", one point of departure is the rational model of Man put forward by game theory. Another important factor is the question concerning automation, an issue raising fears as well as hopes. Here Torsten Ekbohm's "strategic model theatre" *Spelmatriser för Operation Albatross* [(1966) "Game Matrices for Operation Albatross"] is the central object of study. The (often very bizarre) text fragments in this book, are, fictionally, generated by a number of computers.

But these perspectives could also be seen from a more reconciling point of view. By regarding technology as something deeply human, as an intergrated part – or limb – of Homo Faber, we become aware of the possibility that the "natural" and self-contained human being never existed. The "nature" of Man is the nature of tools, and of artificial solidarity.

**Keywords:** Swedish literature 1965-70, cybernetics, posthumanism, media history discourse analysis, Torsten Ekbohm, Göran Palm, Staffan Seeberg, N. Katherine Hayles, Marshall McLuhan, Norbert Wiener

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