



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

# MELLAN FÖRTROLLNING OCH AVFÖRTROLLNING

## om vildmarksromantik i norrländsk litteratur

Fanny Sjödahl Lindgren

### Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorexamen framläggs till offentligt försvar i Hörsal HUM D.220 Hjortronlandet, Humanisthuset, fredagen den 16 maj, kl. 13:15.

Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på svenska.

Fakultetsopponent: Universitetslektor, Åsa Nilsson Skåve

Linnéuniversitetet, Växjö, Sverige.

**Organization**

Umeå University  
Department name

**Document type**

Doctoral thesis

**Date of publication**

25 april 2025

**Author**

Fanny Sjödahl Lindgren

**Title**

Between Enchantment and Disenchantment: on wilderness romance in northern Swedish fiction

**Abstract**

The purpose of this dissertation is to critically evaluate and examine the concept of wilderness romance [vildmarksromantik], its various possibilities, meanings, and uses in a Northern Swedish literary context. Theories on modernity and ecocriticism are important starting points for the analysis. The category “wilderness romance” has been used to classify early Northern Swedish literature from the turn of the last century. However, the term “wilderness romance” has often carried a pejorative meaning, depicting Northern Sweden in a romantic light with a focus on beautiful nature — far from the social problems that characterized the region in the wake of modernity and the industrialization of forestry, hydropower, and mining.

The thesis starts with a reception study of the author Pelle Molin’s book *Ådalens poesi* (1897) where the origins of the meaning behind the concept of “wilderness romance” is traced. The study proceeds to examine how “wilderness romance” has been used and established as a pejorative concept in both press and in literary history. The study finds that the negative response to wilderness romance in the historical works draws on the romanticizing view of *Ådalens poesi* and Pelle Molin present in the reception rather than readings of Molin or some of his allegedly many epigones.

The thesis continues to analyze a few of the literary works that has been categorized as “wilderness romance”, drawing from theories on modernity and ecocriticism. The analysis shows that none of the works are silent on the matter of industrialization and modernization of Northern Sweden around the turn of the century. Rather, a criticism based in the magical and otherworldly emerges, highlighting the importance of human immanence in relation to nature.

Further, the thesis moves on to analyse a few contemporary northern Swedish novels to track in what way traces of “wilderness romance” can be found in contemporary works. The study finds that also the contemporary works utilizes some of the same motifs to carry the criticism of civilization, such as the myths of trolls, the deep and unknown forest and the problematization of the human-animal relationship.

In conclusion, the thesis finds that the previous understanding of the category “wilderness romance” to be simplified regarding the critical potential of the works of literature categorized as such. There is, in these works, criticism of modernity and exploitation of nature, but also a story about grief and sorrow of the enchanted world lost through industrialization.

**Keywords**

Norrländ, norrlandslitteratur, vildmarksromantik, indignationslitteratur, norrländsk litteraturhistoria, modernitet, industrialisering, Pelle Molin, Alfhiild Agrell, Maria Rieck-Müller, Valdemar Lindholm, Kerstin Ekman, Nina Wähä, Mats Söderlund, Stefan Spjut.

**Language**

Svenska

**ISBN**

Print: 978-91-8070-684-1  
PDF: 978-91-8070-685-8

**Number of pages**

238