

Jönköping University

EXPERIENCING LITERATURE: TOWARDS A THIRD SPACE

What does rethinking the role of the teacher and the purpose of studying literature entail? In this presentation we will consider this question in order to draw up the contours of what we term a third space of analysis; a space which we envision will offer an alternate route to approach the teaching and studying of literature. In this third space, the temporal structure of experience will be taken into account as we cannot analyse *and* experience literature at the same time. Reading, from this perspective, is an event, yet for this event to be meaningful, time is of the essence. Not only do students need more time to assimilate ideas, they also need to learn how to think *from* experience and be encouraged to trust the *process* (temporal) by means of which ideas take shape (Gendlin). In following their own felt responses to the literary work of art, students would be free to 'go anywhere' in order to explore their ideas. Consequently, studying should be considered a "state of exception" (Lewis) that automatically resists attempts to make it productive or useful. Indeed, studying is by nature both "immeasurable and unquantifiable" (Lewis, 2011). The student or studier (in Agamben's/Lewis's sense), we suggest, is an 'auto-didact' (Lewis 2011,) and the teacher's role is to provide merely the time and space and, perhaps, the materials for studying. Studying from this perspective is "a self-organizing event" (Lewis). So, what does all of this mean for the practice of teaching and assessing literature? We propose that resistance to teleology or goal-orientate studies does not necessarily make for a resistance also to assessment. Rather, an approach to studying in which the event of study is prioritized over its end, seems to invite new possibilities for analysing and systematising literary works. How, then, can we as teachers negotiate this in terms of the strict requirements set by government agencies of ILO's in our courses and programmes? How can we structure teaching/studying situations of a third space nature of this kind, without making it precisely into "means to an end"? Indeed, can there be studying without end? We hope that our presentation will invite a rich discussion on these and other related issues.

Keywords: experience, education, philosophy of education, Agamben, felt meaning, teaching, learning, phenomenology, 'the learning society'

Short bio:

Charlotta Palmstierna Einarsson received her PhD from Stockholm University for her thesis *Mis-Movements: The Aesthetics of Gesture in Samuel Beckett's Drama* (2012). Her research interests include modernist literature, drama and dance studies, aesthetics, reception theory, philosophy and phenomenology. Charlotta is finishing a book tracing the transformation in Beckett's dramatic work, from the early plays assault against words to the late dramas' recognition of the affordances of the body on stage. The book is edited by Paul Stewart, and will be published by *ibdiem* Verlag, "Samuel Beckett in Company" - series.

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Elisabet Dellming received her PhD in English literature from Stockholm University in 2015 for the thesis "*Unsought, presented so easily*": A Phenomenological Study of *Ave* in the Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, a study she is now revising for publication. Her current research focus is on how literature can critique the production and attainment of knowledge and she specifically looks at how silence as a metaphor for resistance and withdrawal can constitute an alternative epistemology through narratives. Silence in this respect is also key to the postdoctoral research project she is developing. In the project she will be examining Marilynne

Robinson's fiction through the lens of the clandestine as an active epistemological stance in her exploration of how Robinson's narratives function as (what Virginia Woolf called) "pre-communicative zones of silence".
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