



The poet Nina Södergren. Photo by Astrid Broberg.

Sensing Birdpoetic Worlds

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The Swedish poet Nina Södergren's writings are multi-species events. Birds in particular feature strongly though, with her poems being animated by around 275 different bird varieties. How can Södergren's birdpoetics function as an invitation to sense a relational experience with the more-than-human world? Following the bird through Södergren's poetry takes the reader on an illuminating journey.

"Many of us prefer to read only what confirms our own worldview. But poetry does the opposite—it helps us to develop a sense of complexity, while making us more sensitive and attentive. This doesn't happen by itself. It isn't just about reading every now and then and thinking you're becoming a better person. You have to listen like a poet and let the poem into you with hesitation and wonder."

These are the words of the editor Mats Ahlberg, who interviewed poet Nina Södergren (1924–2015) at the age of 90, just a year before her death.¹ Nina wrote all her life. Besides poetry, she kept a daily diary and submitted shorter newspaper articles and essays. Her debut collection was published at the age of 49 in 1973, and her 10th and last, *Högt ärade trana* (*Highly honoured crane*),² at the age of 88, in 2012. I agree with Ahlberg that poetry invokes wonder and opens up worlds, and in the case of Nina Södergren, it especially opens up worlds of the more-than-human.³ Through her poetry, I believe we can sense the interconnectedness with the animated earth, particularly if we bring attentiveness to our reading.

Södergren was born in Gothenburg and had a particular connection to birds that could be traced back to her childhood and the influence of her ornithologist mother. She was clearly also inspired by the bird life on the island of Öland where she lived for many years, that is a popular resting place for migratory birds. While various animals feature in her poems, as many as 275 birds animate her poetry collections.

It was in Öland that Södergren met her husband, the artist Sigfrid 'Siffran' Södergren. During their married life, Nina and Sigfrid were apart for long periods as he often traveled to the Congo, his childhood home, to work on his painting. They had two children together, both now artists, and her daughter Maria returned to their childhood home in Öland after her father died in 2000.

I had the privilege of visiting the Södergrens' house in April 2023. It was a treat to walk in the footsteps of Nina Södergren amongst the colors of spring and to be immersed in the Öland landscape. I spent time with Maria and listened to stories about Nina's fascinating life, about her relationships with Sigfrid, her children, her many dogs, and friends. Maria remains struck by the immediacy of her mother's poetry, and commented that to read Nina's poems '...is to understand her feelings and thoughts, the moment she wrote them.'

Nina Södergren is not considered to be one of Sweden's more popular poets and before writing my thesis '*Birdpoetic Worlds: Sensing the more-than-human worlds through Nina Södergren's bird poems*',⁴ only one academic paper that focused on her poetry had been written previously, in 1987. In fact, I only came across her poetry collection *I fågelspråket* (2005) by chance, while researching the work of other poets. I was struck by the lightness and life-affirming quality of her poems and was fascinated by her love of birds. In my thesis, I chose to examine 26 poems from Södergren's poetry collection, *Högt ärade trana*, through the lens of ecocriticism and animism. I also discussed the different linguistic, poetic, and embodied approaches in her work and what implications they have for a wider understanding of ecological interconnectedness. Nina Södergren's poems can be comprehended as rather naturalistic, embracing both the material and the immaterial, and they seemingly treat everything equally, whether ephemeral human thoughts or the concrete matter of the natural world (including birds).

This essay will explore how Nina Södergren's bird poetics can create a sense of interconnectedness with the more-than-human world. It will also briefly discuss the theoretical perspectives of ecocriticism and animism.

From anthropocentric to ecocentric

Ecocriticism is a literary, interdisciplinary field that emerged in the 1990s.⁵ As its starting point, it critiques the anthropocentric paradigm, which considers human beings to have intrinsic value and be hierarchically superior. From the anthropocentric perspective, animals and nature are seen to have only instrumental value in so far as they are a resource or source of entertainment benefitting humans.⁶ Anthropomorphism, the practice of applying human attributes to the nonhuman, can also be considered to be a form of anthropocentrism,⁷ which includes the metaphorical or metaphysical portrayal of animals. Birds in particular are commonly used in poetry as representations and symbols of human experience. But by comparison, an ecocentric perspective holds that we share this world with animals⁸ and that our connection to them can deepen our understanding of what it is to be human. Poems representing an ecocentric outlook therefore describe human beings as similar to, as opposed to separate from, animals and they hold the view that they and we are kin.

Reciprocity and non-dualism are core principles of ecocentrism that find their roots in deep ecology, founded by philosopher Arne Næss in 1973. Næss considered nature to be a kind of 'extended self', so whatever damages nature is also harmful to humans.⁹ In the same way, ecocentric poetry doesn't reduce nature to an aesthetic background, but presents itself as interwoven with the human, though with a logic and legitimacy of its own. Humans then, are seen as sentient beings engaged in a causally dependent relationship with all ecological interactions on earth.

Attentiveness, attunement, and awareness

We can't be certain exactly how Södergren perceived the environment and the spiritual realm, but similarly to Næss, she seems to have seen the world as an extended self. Following the birds in her poetry through the ecocritical and animist lens, it is easy to find evidence of her appreciation for nature, her attentiveness, and her connection with her own inner and outer environments. Her poetry is personal, whilst also engaging with universal, existential themes of love, longing, and living. Her poems are, however, often closer to the more-than-human worlds than those of humans, which strengthens their relational and ecocentric qualities. While not all 'nature poets' present an ecological perspective, one can claim that Södergren's poetry is implicitly ecocritical. Her work can be read as an invitation to reconnect with our shared realities. Even when she captures a single moment, a sense of timelessness arises, together with a reflection on the contingent nature of life itself. In this poem, *Kråkornas förbund*, she shares a moment with crows:

Gråberget är överdraget med tunn
smältis – som fläckar av blankt sälskinn.
Kråkan har rest upp alla
fjädrar i sin svarta ansiktsmask och närmar
sig honan med utspänd stjärt. Kråmande
och bugande. Hon avvaktar – med en
bit mossa i näbben. Som hon sedan släpper
framför den kråmandes fötter. Han avbryter
sina höviska och djupa kraxande. Högtidligt
– som om han smakade på en oblat – bryter
han en bit av mossan.¹⁰

Södergren begins by establishing the scene, situated in place. The male's plumage is the focus in the courtship and the offering of a piece of moss is confirmation of the female's liking. This imaginative poem offers a promise: that our attentiveness to birds will be rewarded with the secrets of that species' experience, as well as revelations about how we perceive non-human consciousness.

Ecologist and philosopher David Abram, who coined the term 'more-than-human worlds' in his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996), advocates the reappraisal of animism and claims that our understanding of the world is rooted in the sensuous body, in interconnection with the sentience of other animals and plants upon which we are dependent. He writes: "To make sense is to... renew and rejuvenate one's felt awareness of the world. It is to make the senses wake up to where they are."¹¹ Abram claims that the animate terrain is both speaking and listening to us.¹² In another important book, *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry* (2014), author and scholar Aaron M. Moe defines zoopoetics as "the process of discovering innovative breakthroughs in form through an attentiveness to another species' bodily poiesis."¹³ Drawn from the Ancient Greek verb 'to make', poiesis refers to the active creative process involving the expressive body,

gestures, and non-linguistic vocalizations—a multi-species language and communication beyond the alphabet. According to Moe, attentiveness is central to establishing interconnectedness. Perspectives from natural science are increasingly being incorporated into the field of ecocriticism, and new theoretical orientations, such as human-animal studies, have arisen. According to professor and author Michael Lundblad, they share a primary focus on “intertwined interactions, relationships, and becomings that involve human and nonhuman beings.”¹⁴

The existential and the divine

Abram describes animistic attunement in his perception of birdsong: “...no longer just a melodic background to human speech, but meaningful speech in its own right, responding to and commenting on events in the surrounding earth.”¹⁵ Similarly, Nina Södergren links the birds, and especially birdsong, to life: “Som lärkan drillar...Som göken gol...Som livet sjöng och sjunger...”¹⁶ In fact, many of her poems have an existential theme, including both direct and indirect references to life and death and she also contemplates our differences to and relatedness with, the living world. One example of Södergren’s ability to blend the existential and the earthbound can be found in her love poem, *Högt över heden*. In this poem, the perspective broadens so that the reader almost gets a sense of vertigo from the musings of the human narrator who is simultaneously lying in the grass. According to her fellow poet and friend Lennart Sjögren, “(t)he poem expands and becomes a panorama of both nature and a person’s life journey”. He considers it to be one of Södergren’s quintessential poems.¹⁷ The structure is neat and simple, accentuating the meaning of the following touching lines:

Högt över heden
cirklar tranorna
burna av uppvind

Horisonten är rund!
På rygg i gräset
med slutna ögon
känner jag jorden gå runt.

Allt som någonsin älskat
cirklar runt solen

Burna av uppvind
högt över heden
cirklar sånger och famntag
läppar
mular
nosar
ögon
tassar och
klor

Allt som jag någonsin älskat

Allt som någonsin slitit sönder
mitt hjärta
cirklar runt solen¹⁸

The cranes being carried by the upwind sets a solemn tone to the poem. Although Södergren takes her own human body and her interactions close to the earth as her starting point, she portrays love as being independent of all species. The characteristics of specific species are listed, word-by-word, creating an uptempo rhythm and turning the poem into a multi-species event. The underlying meaning remains however: that love and heartbreak are universal—that we are all part of creation and the greater tapestry of life. The existential themes of life, death, love, aliveness and sorrow, are embodied in the shared experience of the human and more-than-human realms. In this and other poems, Södergren's writing is rooted in the sensuous body while she also observes or interacts with the birds, instead of simply writing from her thoughts and mind.

The migratory cranes are a common theme in Södergren's final volume. Lennart Sjögren claims that, "(t)he bird of farewell and return...becomes the symbol of the total phenomenon of life."¹⁹ Cranes are a symbol of longevity in Chinese mythology²⁰ and are also seen as divine in various myths. In this poem, the divine is described as ecstatic and joyous:

Om Gud är alltings själ, anar jag den
i uppbrottets trumpet och det extatiska sorlandet,
när tranorna drar bort över havet.²¹

Here, there is a movement from the heavenly sphere to a description of a lively situation involving cranes. Even though the word 'God' is used, it refers more to an animistic notion of the divine. Sjögren suggests that her use of the word 'God' is more sensualist than religious; that "(her) poetry mainly belongs to this life—that which has to do with skin, hands, and claws".²² She is embedded in the land, of this earth, in the bodies.

It is possible that Södergren believed in reincarnation. Rebirth is also the main theme in *Genom sången föds livet på nytt*²³ that presents various 'songs' of nature, including those of animals, plants and ocean waves, but also of gods and spirits. In the following line, Södergren compares the sound of human lovers making love to that of the bittern, a secretive bird of the heron family: "älskarens kärleksstön, när han låter som en rördrom."²⁴ Sonic entanglements are embraced in her poetry, not just those between humans and animals but all those found in the natural world. Together, they demonstrate Södergren's keen awareness of the interconnectedness of all things.

Occasionally in Södergren's work, the everyday and the profane are combined with pastoral observations or with the sacredness she witnesses around her. In the following poem, for

example, the olfactory and visual senses give way to a broader meaning:

Tranor hörs från strandängen
men syns inte

Ensilagesäckarna skymmer sikten
Myrsyran sticker i näsan
Trasor av plast flaggar i vinden
Tranornas trumpeter
uppmanar till flykt ²⁵

Interconnectedness, longing, and becoming

For Södergren, there is little distance between the animal and the human. It could be claimed that she keeps an interested and loving eye on animals without trying to de-mystify them or claiming to fully comprehend them. In some poems, she even shares a longing to become an animal, as in the following example:

I
Dibarnet
suger med inåtvänd blick
Världen är ett varmt bröst
Modern känner diandets rytm
som ett sövande hav
Hon ville vara fågelhona
och breda mjuka fjädrar över gossen
Hon ville vara katt
och slicka honom

II
Jollrandet, gnyendet
det varma animaliska mörkret
(i vilket det är en tröst att vara)
Revir att försvara
som när hunden skäller under täcket²⁶

Is it freedom from humanity she longs for? Or the seemingly undemanding life of a bird? The reader might find their experience being mirrored by the poems, or that new, relevant questions and reflections emerge through them. A sense of longing weaves through Södergren's poetry, which often is symbolized by the crane:

Men
tranorna finns
med vildmarkens trumpeter

Tranorna finns
Den svarthalsade
Den grå
Sandkulletranan

Antigonetranan

Snötranan

Krontranan

Paradistranan

Tranorna finns

och färdas mellan kontinenterna

Tranorna finns

och det uråldriga skriet som bottnar

i skapelsens hjärta²⁷

Södergren respectfully names many different species of crane in her work. Although poems written from the perspective of the crane don't presume to imagine the content of the bird's perception, it is through the poem's attentiveness to the bird that we can 'become witness' to their experience of the world. It is as if Södergren is a visitor in the crane's majestic world.

The following poem/hymn, *Högt ärade trana*, has a heightened alertness and fast rhythm to it, conjured by the dramatic scenery and the poet's embodied sensations. Here, she speaks to the cranes instead of about them:

Högt ärade trana

Högt ärade

högbenta trana

Din trumpet

plöjer mina sinnen

som när en lovsång

oväntat

färdas genom kroppen

Uppflog

Trumpeter

Flykt

Vingar

högt ärade trana

Ditt vilda skri förbinder mig

med kärlekens kontinenter

Under dina vingar

kvarlämnad på jorden

– fast resklar –

står jag i en svallvåg av vingbrus

Högt ärade

högbenta trana

i den bränning av längtan

ditt skri efterlämnar²⁸

The crane is celebrated as a wild, beautiful, powerful creature and can be regarded as Södergren's totem animal.²⁹ Södergren's longing is also palpable in the below poem, *Inte*

ett eko svarar. In the following excerpts, she begins by identifying as a rock and reflects on the difficulties of inter-species communication:

Jag sitter som en sten
bland stenar
Hur meddela sig?
Till vem?
Spov, pipare, lärka?
(...)
Jag sitter som en sten
bland stenar
Saknar trummorna
som talar med de döda
Saknar guanchernas visselspråk
över Kanarieöarnas terrasser
Saknar jojken
över fjällvidderna³⁰
(...)

Södergren sits in stillness, a solitary member of her species, not revealing herself through movement. Shutting down her connection to the outside world makes her more attuned to her inner thoughts. The metaphor of being a stone can be interpreted as being frozen in time and of feelings being solidified. The poet is thinking of memories from long ago, of traveling to distant places such as the Congo, and of feelings kept within. It is possible to hear a 2015 recording of Södergren reading the poem in full [here](#).

Shamanic influence and imagination

Shamanism, an expression of animism, is often referred to in Södergren's poetry. Shamans are common to indigenous cultures and their practices involve entering trance states, in order to communicate with forces or spirits from 'other' worlds.³¹ Though we have encountered Södergren's longing to become an animal in other poems, the following extract is probably the closest she gets:

Drömmer
att jag sticker in min tunga
i en fågels näbb
jag är en afrikansk schaman
skall födas in i fågelspråket
fågelstrupen fågelhjärtat
jag blandar tungomål och fågelsång
och talar med tukanens näbb³²

Here, Södergren doesn't explicitly describe becoming the bird, as a narrator with its own language and expression, as do Les Murray and Ted Hughes in several of their poems. (In that sense, her work is more similar to that of Kenneth White, who incidentally also includes

many shamanic references in his poetry.) But instead, Södergren touches upon it as an idea, a longing in her imagination.

In the nightly dreamtime consciousness,³³ there are no limits between humans and the animal kingdom. Dreaming is a zone in which close inter-species relationships can take place. 'Dreaming' is also the indigenous Australians' term for the formative era before recorded history. And the truths, knowledge, and beliefs from that era are understood as being situated in place, in the landscape. According to anthropologist Tim Ingold, they are transmitted "within the context of a direct perceptual engagement with our environments".³⁴ He claims that relational involvement is all about attention and the discovery of the meanings revealed through clues that then open up our awareness. Imagining being a bird or a shaman might therefore reveal new truths for Södergren. Perhaps the shaman represents a longing for the mythical? Or perhaps it evokes a time when human beings and animals were closer, before humankind's separateness.

It is important to note that Södergren's mythical imagination is not just linked to birds, but to nature and culture as a whole. Her openness to other cultures, particularly indigenous ones, mirrors her openness to 'otherness' in nature and to 'otherness' in general.

Sociopolitical entanglements

Södergren has a presence of mind, defined by Sjögren as "a clear-eyed and sometimes sharp gaze that does not give way to the vulnerability of life and the state of the world."³⁵ Her seriousness paired with the ease and brevity in her style makes her work impactful and effective. Without being tendentious, Södergren draws attention to humankind's morally reprehensible actions and to the damage that we have caused to our relationships with other species.³⁶ This is depicted in the following poem about human cruelty, where she plays the role of a scientist dissecting a bird:

Sovande starflockar
sprängs med dynamit i Belgien
(som man gör med vävarfåglarna i Afrika.)

Klungor av fågelblommor
faller och faller
från körsbärsträden.

Studerar man fåglarnas sköra blodsystem
som går ut i minsta fjäder
och hur sinnrikt en fjäder
sitter fast på en fågel
förstår man att stararna
blir plockade på en gång.
På en gång exploderar blodkärlen.
Fjädrar i åkern,
blod, vingar och ben

som efter en smärre massaker.

Klungor av fågelblommor
faller och faller.³⁷

The sociopolitical standpoint in this poem is clear: that the world is painfully anthropocentric. This is portrayed in an engaging way, whereby the birds are shown to be victims as well as symbols of innocence and beauty destroyed.

Another example of Södergren's work that challenges the anthropocentric viewpoint is a prose poem about war and a dead caged parrot. Södergren writes: "...Jakos fjädrar, nu fria, seglade på Kongo, röda som blodet i människornas krig. Tillbaka till mangroveträdens väldiga träsk där livet föds på nytt."³⁸ The relationship between the parrot and humans is mutual and metonymic, the purpose being to shine a light on their shared suffering. In the poem she writes that "life is born anew", indicating a spiritual outlook that might have also offered her some salvation. She doesn't shy away from misery but somehow accepts it as part of the fragility of life. Though these are primarily bird poems, they can be entered and understood through the human realm of the sociopolitical, inviting the reader to reflect upon our social conditions and wounded relationships with our fellow species.

Poetry that reveals our interconnectedness

The wingspan of Södergren's poetry covers the social, the cross-cultural, the scientific, the shamanistic, and the existential, while all the time celebrating interconnectedness and attentiveness. Through birds, she entreats the reader to open to a relational world in multiple ways. For example, she portrays human and 'natural' life as being intertwined, with everything being connected in a continuum. The language, form, structure, and rhythm complement these portrayals, whilst also giving rise to more depth of meaning. Södergren harnesses the relational nature of language itself and uses it to emphasize the connections between humanity and the world in a way that enhances the performative power of her work. She writes the world, whether as concrete reality or following her beliefs and imagination. In addition, the poems are imbued with her open worldview, and like the cranes, we as readers migrate from faraway countries to her beloved island Öland, and out into the wider world again.

By including imagination, dreaming and the sensuous body in our experience, we can access meanings other than our own. By doing the same, Södergren can present otherness in the many ways it can appear as both different and similar to the human experience. Perhaps it is easier to grasp interconnectedness by reading poetry that portrays animals, plants, and rocks in an animated way. To open up to the poem is to open up to the relationships of this world.

Södergren's birdpoetics are a call for paying attention to the wonders and realities of the

universe, and perhaps to find spiritual growth; to use your attentive and close listening, as would a poet. Poetry can bring us into presence, capture a moment in time-space and reveal new perspectives of being in it—and of the beings in it. The attentiveness has a spreading influence across species, context and medium, and between animal, poet, and reader. Whatever your present experience while reading Södergren's poems, and whether you are actively engaged or openly relaxed as you do so, her lines will probably speak to you and challenge your perception of life and your relationship to the world. A longing to explore the more-than-human world might arise, like a hidden message emerging between the lines of Södergren. Go out and about, and experience the birdpoetic worlds!

¹ Mats Ahlberg, "Resans Syster", *Balder*, 2014. Retrieved 05.05.23, from: <http://www.baldersforlag.se/2014/12/resans-syster/> (Author's translation.)

² Nina Södergren's work is not yet translated. Note: all the translations in this essay are roughly made by the author. They are provided to give an idea of the poems' content and style to be able to follow the discussion.

³ Cultural ecologist and philosopher David Abram coined the phrase 'more-than-human world' in 1996. Abram offers an animistic dimension of the sensuous environment that surrounds us if we let our sensibility and awareness expand. David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1996).

⁴ Available at: <https://sh.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:1732869> or https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370527711_Birdpoetic_Worlds_Sensing_the_more-than-human_worlds_through_Nina_Sodergren's_bird_poems

⁵ Marie Öhman, "Ekokritik, Litteratur, natur, djur", *Litteraturvetenskap II*, eds. Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed, Andreas Hedberg, Johan Svedjedal (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2020), p. 189. The term 'ecocriticism' was coined by William Rueckert in 1978.

⁶ Öhman 2020, p. 195.

⁷ John Shoptaw, "Why Ecopoetry? There's no Planet B", *Poetry Magazine*, 04.01.16. Retrieved 03.11.22, from: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/70299/why-ecopoetry>

⁸ Aaron M. Moe, *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry* (2014), pp. 17–18. Moe claims that anthropomorphism "is only a fallacy when...one does not see continuity between animal—human spheres" and speaks of a 'critical' anthropomorphism.

⁹ Öhman 2020, pp. 195–196. This view is close to the biocentric perspective, which takes all living things as a starting point.

¹⁰ Nina Södergren, *Högt ärade trana: Nya dikter och urval av tidigare poesi* (Stockholm/Höör: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, 2012), p. 125. (First published in *Hjärtat mot vinden* 1984.) "The Crows' alliance / The granite is covered with thin / melting ice—like patches of shiny sealskin. / The crow has raised all / the feathers in its black face mask and approaches / the female with an outstretched tail. Groaning / and bowing. She waits—with a / piece of moss in her beak. Which she then drops / in front of the crowing's feet. He interrupts / his courtly and deep croaking. Solemnly /—as if he tasted a wafer—he breaks / a piece of the moss"

¹¹ Abram 1996, p. 277.

¹² Abram 1996, p. 158.

¹³ Moe 2014, p.10. The term originated from Jacques Derrida. He used the word in *The Animal That Therefore I am*, which focused on the abundance of animals in Kafka's work. Moe later developed the term further.

¹⁴ Michael Lundblad, "Introduction: The End of the Animal", *Animalities: Literary and Cultural Studies Beyond the Human*, ed. Michael Lundblad (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), p. 2.

¹⁵ Abram 1996, p. 20.

¹⁶ Södergren 2012 (first published in *I fågelspråket* 2005), p. 192. "As the lark chirps /.../ As the cuckoo calls /.../ As life sang and sings"

¹⁷ Lennart Sjögren, "Om den trettonde vågen och igelkottens lövkoja" (foreword) in Södergren 2012, pp. 10–11.

¹⁸ Södergren 2012 (first published in *I fågelspråket* 2005), p. 186. "High above the heath / the cranes circle / carried by the upwind /// The horizon is round! / On my back in the grass / with my eyes closed / I feel the earth go round. /// Everything that ever loved / revolves around the sun /// Carried by upwind / high above the heath / songs and hugs circles / lips / amulets / noses / eyes / paws and / claws /// Everything that I ever loved / Everything that ever tore apart / my heart /// circles around the sun"

¹⁹ Sjögren 2012, p. 13. (Author's translation.)

²⁰ Wikipedia, Crane in Chinese mythology. Retrieved 03.12.22, from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crane_in_Chinese_mythology

²¹ Södergren 2012 (first published in *Att vara och stilla gråta* 2008), p. 227. "If God is the soul of all things, I perceive it / in the trumpet of the breaking up and the ecstatic murmur, / when the cranes drift away over the sea"

²² Sjögren 2012, pp. 12–13. (Author's translation.)

²³ Södergren 2012, p. 48. "Through the song, life is born anew"

²⁴ "the moan of the lover, when he sounds like a bittern" (a type of heron.)

²⁵ Södergren 2012, p. 71. "Cranes are heard from the beach meadow / but not visible /// The sacks of ensilage obscure the view / The formic acid stings the nose /// Plastic rags flutter in the wind / Trumpets of cranes / calling for flight"

²⁶ Södergren 2012, p. 47. "I/ The child suckles / with an inward look / The world is a warm breast / The mother feels the rhythm of the breastfeeding / like a sleeping sea / She wanted to be a female bird / and spread soft feathers over the boy / She wanted to be a cat / and lick him /// II / The dinghy, the grinding / the warm animal darkness / (in which it is a comfort to be) / Territory to defend / like when the dog barks under the covers"

²⁷ Södergren 2012, p. 72. "But / the cranes exist / with the trumpets of the wilderness /// The cranes exist / The black-necked / The grey / The [Sandkulle] crane / The Antigone crane / The snow crane / The Crown crane / The paradise crane /// The cranes exist / and travel between the continents / The cranes exist / and the ancient cry that lies / in the heart of creation"

²⁸ Södergren 2012, p. 15. "Highly honoured crane /// Highly honoured / high-legged crane / Your trumpet / ploughs my senses / as when a song of praise / unexpectedly / travels through the body / Upflight / Trumpets / Flight / Wings / highly honoured crane / Your wild cry connects me / to the continents of love / Under your wings / left on earth /—but on the wing—/ I stand in a surge of wings' sough / Highly honoured / high-legged crane / in the burning of longing / your cry leaves behind"

²⁹ Yvonne Reddick, *Ted Hughes: Environmentalist and Ecopoet* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer Nature, 2017), p. 111. There are parallels between this paper's research and that conducted on the work of Ted Hughes. Reddick cites Bate, who sees the jaguar as Hughes's totem animal: ".../ the role of the poet is to .../ set free the spirit of the jaguar, to return humankind to its primal relationship with nature." One can suggest that Södergren's purpose is to bring forth the spirits of the birds and nature and to establish a closer connection.

³⁰ Södergren 2012 (first published in *I fågelspråket* 2005), p.187. "Not an echo answer / I sit like a stone / among stones / How to notify? / To whom? / Curlew, plover, lark? /.../ I sit like a stone / among stones / Miss the drums / who speak with the dead / Miss the whistling language of the Guanches / over the terraces of the Canary Islands / Miss the joik / over the mountain ranges /.../"

³¹ Robert L Winzeler, *Anthropology and Religion: What We Know, Think and Question*. Second ed. (California: AltaMira Press, 2012), pp. 186–187.

³² Södergren 2012 (first published in *I fågelspråket* 2005), p.190. "I dream / that I stick my tongue / into a bird's beak / I am an African shaman / to be born into the bird language / bird throat bird heart / I mix tongue and bird song / and speak with the toucan's beak"

³³ Les Murray reveals that his work is a combination of three varieties of mental activity: daytime consciousness, dreamtime consciousness, and 'the body'. According to Murray, writing that doesn't pay respect to these three aspects "is mendacious", which is why western academia can't embrace the full concept of 'otherness'. Cited in: Justin E. H. Smith, "Prose isn't here to stay: The Poetry of Les Murray". Retrieved 01.01.14, from: <https://www.jehsmith.com/1/2014/01/the-poetry-of-les-murray.html>

³⁴ Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 21–22.

³⁵ Sjögren p. 8. (Author's translation.)

³⁶ Björck 2022, p. 90.

³⁷ Södergren 2012 (first published in *Blå är mina önskningar* 1990), p. 157. "Sleeping starling flocks / is blown up with dynamite in Belgium / (as is done with the weaver birds in Africa.) /// Clusters of bird flowers / falling and falling / from the cherry trees. /// If you study the fragile blood system of birds / which ends in the smallest feather / and how ingeniously a feather / is attached to a bird / you understand that the starlings / are plucked all at once. / All at once the blood vessels explode. / Feathers in the field, / blood, wings, and bones / like after a minor massacre. /// Clusters of bird flowers / falling and falling"

³⁸ Södergren 2012, p. 44. "Jako's feathers, now free, sailed on the Congo, red as the blood of men's wars. Back to the vast swamp of mangrove trees where life is born anew"