Author portrait:

http://litteraturbanken.se/#!forfattare/LevertinO

Two paintings of Levertin by Carl Larsson:

http://runeberg.org/clarsson/cl0025.jpg

http://runeberg.org/clarsson/cl0026.jpg

Levertin, Oscar (1862-1906)

Oscar Levertin was born at Gryt Manor in Norrköping, Sweden. He pursued an academic career at Uppsala University, where he received his doctorate in 1888. Beginning in 1893 he taught literature and art history at Stockholm College, where he became a professor in 1899. Levertin was also employed as a literary critic, joining the daily newspaper Svenska Dagbladet in 1897.

Although Levertin made his literary debut in the early 1880s, he rose to prominence as an author and critic allied with a neo-Romantic school of literature – in Swedish often simply referred to as the "ninety-ists" ["nittiotalisterna"] – a movement which defined itself through its opposition to the Naturalism of the 1880s and whose most notable members included Verner von Heidenstam and Selma Lagerlöf. Levertin's early works, the collections of travel essays and fiction *Från rivieran* (1883), *Småmynt* (1883), and *Konflikter* (1885), belong to the tradition of literary realism. In 1890 Levertin helped usher in a new literary trend which focused on idealism and aesthetic pleasure, eschewing the political subtext of Naturalism. This assault on Naturalism was launched in the pamphlet *Pepitas bröllop* (1890), co-authored with Verner von Heidenstam. In this essay a new aesthetic is proposed which self-consciously embraces the ideals of literary Romanticism.

This reorientation on Levertin's part can be seen in his novel *Lifvets fiender* (1891), which depicts the struggle of an idealist to survive in an unforgiving world, and in his first collection of poetry, *Legender och visor* (1891). Levertin published two more collections of poetry, *Nya dikter* (1894) and *Dikter* (1901), as well as a narrative poem, *Kung Salomo och Morolf* (1905). Levertin's poetry belongs to the same neo-Romantic as Heidenstam's, and motifs are often drawn from the Middle Ages, the Orient, and Swedish folksongs. Levertin's historical novel *Magistrarne i Österås* (1900) is thematically similar to *Lifvets fiender*, featuring the conflict between idealism and realism as a prominent theme.

As a writer of fiction, Levertin often draws inspiration from the Swedish 18th century, most notably in his collection of short stories *Rococo-noveller* (1899). His academic work is preoccupied with the same period. Levertin wrote extensively on the theatre and literature of the late 18th century, authoring essay collections such as *Från Gustaf III:s dagar* (1896). More contemporary authors are treated in the essay collections *Diktare och drömmare* (1898) and *Svenska gestalter* (1903). *Diktare och drömmare* especially focuses on authors such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Joris-Karl Huysmans, and August Strindberg, whom Levertin often treats in a more sensitive manner than other Swedish critics at the time. The significance of Levertin's articles in Svenska Dagbladet on authors such as Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud and Charles Baudelaire, all of whom Levertin helped introduce to a wider audience in Sweden, should not be underestimated.

List of works

*Samlade skrifter*, Stockholm: Bonnier, 1907-1910

*Från rivieran* (1883)

*Småmynt* (1883)

*Konflikter* (1885)

*Pepitas bröllop* (1890) with Verner von Heidenstam

*Lifvets fiender* (1891)

*Legender och visor* (1891)

*Nya dikter* (1894)

*Från Gustaf III:s dagar* (1896)

*Diktare och drömmare* (1898)

*Rococo-noveller* (1899)

*Magistrarne i Österås* (1900)

*Dikter* (1901)

*Svenska gestalter* (1903)

*Kung Salomo och Morolf* (1905)

References and further reading

Fehrman, Carl. *Levertins lyrik*, Lund: Gleerup, 1945

Rydén, Per. *En kritikers väg: studier i Oscar Levertins litteraturkritik 1883-1896*, Lund: Gleerup, 1974

Shachar, Nathan. *Blodseld och nordisk längtan: Oscar Levertin och hans tid*, Stockholm: Atlantis, 2006