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Nordic and European Modernisms

Edited by
Jakob Lothe

Printed Edition of the Special Issue Published in *Humanities*

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Editor

Jakob Lothe

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Editor
Jakob Lothe
Department of Literature,
Area Studies and European
Languages, P.O. Box 1003
Blindern, University of Oslo
Norway

Editorial Office
MDPI
St. Alban-Anlage 66
4052 Basel, Switzerland

This is a reprint of articles from the Special Issue published online in the open access journal *Humanities* (ISSN 2076-0787) (available at: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/humanities/special_issues/European_Modernisms).

For citation purposes, cite each article independently as indicated on the article page online and as indicated below:

LastName, A.A.; LastName, B.B.; LastName, C.C. Article Title. *Journal Name* **Year**, *Volume Number*, Page Range.

ISBN 978-3-0365-1523-6 (Hbk)
ISBN 978-3-0365-1524-3 (PDF)

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About the Editor

Jakob Lothe is Professor Emeritus of English literature at the University of Oslo. His books include *Conrad's Narrative Method* and *Narrative in Fiction and Film* (both from Oxford University Press), and he is co-editor of four volumes in the Theory and Interpretation of Narrative series published by The Ohio State University Press. He was elected to The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters in 1999 and to the American Philosophical Society in 2018.

Preface to "Nordic and European Modernisms"

Presenting the reader with different aspects of, and varying perspectives on, Nordic and European modernisms, this e-book demonstrates the editor's and contributors' strong and lasting interest in modernism as a complex international trend. The book contributes to, and thus continues, research on modernism carried out by many literary scholars at different universities inside and outside the Nordic region. More specifically, it continues the work of a Nordic network whose participants have arranged, among other activities, conferences at the Universities of Aarhus, Gothenburg, Helsinki, Reykjavik and Oslo. These have resulted in several publications, including, in addition to this book, *English and Nordic Modernisms* (Norvik Press, 2002), *European and Nordic Modernisms* (Norvik Press, 2004), *Comparative Approaches to European and Nordic Modernisms* (University of Helsinki Press, 2008), *Nordic Responses* (Novus Press, 2014) and *Perspectives on the Nordic* (Novus Press, 2016).

This e-book is also a contribution to two interdisciplinary research projects at the University of Oslo: Traveling Texts and UiO:Nordic.

I would like to thank the contributors to the book, and to the Special Issue of *Humanities* entitled *Nordic and European Modernisms*, for their interest in the topic and for their thoughtful and thought-provoking articles. I would also like to express my gratitude to the participants in the Nordic network referred to above.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Bjørn Tysdahl (1933–2020). The author of *Joyce and Ibsen: A Study in Literary Influence* (Norwegian University Press, 1968), Professor Tysdahl played a key role in the Nordic network for studies of Nordic and European modernisms.

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Editorial

Editorial Special Issue: "Nordic and European Modernisms"

Jakob Lothe

Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, University of Oslo, 0315 Oslo, Norway; jakob.lothe@ilos.uio.no

This Special Issue of *Humanities* explores the growth and development of Nordic modernisms in a European context. A truly international movement, modernism cuts across many boundaries—geographical, cultural and linguistic; cross-fertilization is a prerequisite for its very existence. Moreover, the diverse forms of modernism that emerged in the Nordic countries at widely differing moments are not limited to literature but also include other art forms such as the visual and performing arts. Indeed, there are few literary and cultural movements in which combinations of different, and often radically experimental, forms of artistic expression are as significant as in modernism.

Concentrating on and yet not limiting itself to the study of literary texts, this Special Issue shows that the emergence of modernism in the Nordic countries is linked to, and inspired by, the innovative works published in western Europe and the USA towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century. Presenting Nordic art as multi-dimensional and dynamic, it also shows that, while responding to original aspects of these modernizing texts, Nordic modernism itself contributed to modernism as a complex international trend. Five examples of this kind of impact, in the genres of the novel, drama and poetry respectively, are Knut Hamsun, August Strindberg, Henrik Ibsen, Edith Södergran and Tomas Tranströmer. Aspects of these authors' continuing impact are considered by several contributors to the Special Issue, but the articles also discuss modernist works written by other Nordic authors as well as translations of modernist texts into the Nordic languages. The plural form "modernisms" in the title of the Special Issue suggests that the contributors adopt an understanding of modernism that, while recognizing the importance of the modernist movement between circa 1890 and 1940, is sufficiently elastic to include various forms of extension and continuation of Nordic modernisms in the post-war period.

There is a link between the continuing importance of modernism and the movement's origins, including a strong experience of crisis at the turn of the twentieth century. Prompting a dissatisfaction with prevalent artistic forms of expression, this experience of crisis underlies modernist artists' search for, and invention of, radically new forms of expression. The crisis—cultural, political, moral, aesthetic—was by no means limited to just one country or one identifiable group of writers; nor was it, as modernisms' global relevance makes clear, restricted to just one continent. At the level of historical reality, the First World War represents the culmination of a crisis which had its beginnings several decades earlier. The Second World War, along with the Holocaust, represents a second culmination of the crisis, and there is a sense in which the feeling, and experience, of crisis has continued to influence and shape Nordic literature written in the post-war period. Over the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the experience of crisis has increasingly been extended to include a growing uncertainty about the future prompted by the reality of climate change.

Starting from the premiss that the constituent aspects of art, aesthetics and language complicate an explanation of "the Nordic" as a concept that is either "self-evident" or "important", this Special Issue aims to provide a venue for sharing, elaborating and refining our understanding of the Nordic in relation to modernism as a complex international trend. Seen in this light, it comes as no surprise that literary studies as featured in this Special Issue include discussions of literary translation in the cultural and historical context of the Nordic

Citation: Lothe, Jakob. 2021. Editorial Special Issue: "Nordic and European Modernisms". *Humanities* 10: 79. https://doi.org/10.3390/h10020079

Received: 21 May 2021
Accepted: 25 May 2021
Published: 27 May 2021

countries, investigating the interdependence of and interrelationships between translation, literature, literary history and literary culture. A further premiss is that although the focus of the issue is on individual works and authors, we also need to pay attention to "translation" as an inevitable element in forms of writing and art. This includes not only the presence of the "foreign" in original writing but also the transnational element in any discussion of foreign literature and culture.

Displaying the originality, impact and range of Nordic and European modernisms, the 11 articles of this Special Issue are interestingly linked to each other. While eight of the articles deal primarily with aspects of Nordic modernism in the novel, in drama and in poetry, three of them discuss facets of modernism not limited to one particular genre.

In "Modernism—Borders and Crises", Ástráður Eysteinsson reflects on the concept and history of literary modernism in a way that is related to, and illuminates, the other contributions. Two important points of reference for Eysteinsson's reflective article on the borders and crises of modernism are Erich Auerbach's classic study, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (first published in German in 1946) and *Modernism: 1890–1930*, a volume (published in 1976) edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane. While the view of modernism expounded by Bradbury and McFarlane has proved influential, Eysteinsson notes that the revision of modernism undertaken in the early years of the twenty-first century involves a critique of the geography, canon and time frame of modernism as staged in their book. The Special Issue contributes to this ongoing revision, highlighting the contribution of Nordic modernism.

Modernist literature has a reputation for being difficult, in part even inaccessible. However, as Susan C. Brantly demonstrates in "Nordic Modernism for Beginners", it is perfectly possible to explain Nordic modernisms to an audience of beginners, including college students. Brantly notes that although the Modern Breakthrough (the phrase, coined by Danish critic Georg Brandes in 1883, constitutes an important moment in Nordic literary history) and modernism share some characteristic features, there are differences between the two movements. For example, a modernist writer tends to express a stronger belief in subjectivity and to see the world as more radically fragmented than does a representative of the Modern Breakthrough. Both the similarities and the differences are, as Brantly observes, significant.

In common with all contributors to the Special Issue, Annegret Heitmann considers modernism as a response to modernity: the progressive modernization of society (especially the societies of Western Europe and North America) since the Renaissance, and particularly after the French Revolution and the British Industrial Revolution. Heitmann's article, "Nordic Modernists in the Circus: On the Aesthetic Reflection of a Transcultural Institution", shows that the circus contributed to this complex response, as manifested by the ways in which the circus represents the fragile status of art in modernity. Figuring prominently in works by modernist authors and artists—including Kafka, Thomas Mann, Degas and Macke—the circus is also thematized in texts by Nordic authors such as Henrik Ibsen, Herman Bang, Ola Hansson and Johannes V. Jensen.

Associated with and characterized by mobility and innovation, the circus is linked to the rapid growth of cities over the course of the nineteenth century. In "Urban Space and Gender Performativity in Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* and Cora Sandel's *Alberta and Freedom*", Unni Langås discusses how life in the city and gender performativity are combined in these two classic Norwegian novels—*Sult* from 1890 and *Alberte og friheten* from 1931. Langås's discussion proceeds from the observation that gender norms of life in the city, be it Kristiania (the name of Oslo until 1925) or Paris, are critical premisses for the subject's negotiation of different options, obstacles and possibilities in his or her modern existence.

In the early twenty-first century, there is a growing realization that modernist texts in translation have played, and continue to play, a key role in the movement's development. Mats Jansson and Elisabeth Bladh address the topic of translation explicitly. Jansson's contribution, "In the Traces of Modernism: William Faulkner in Swedish Criticism 1932–1950", considers the reception of Faulkner in Sweden and Swedish Faulkner criticism from 1932

until the Nobel Prize announcement in 1950, arguing that both epitomize key features of the notion of "modernism". In "The Reception of the Swedish Retranslation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (2012)", Bladh discusses how the second Swedish translation of Joyce's modernist novel from 1922 was received by Swedish critics. Noting that the release of Erik Andersson's new translation was a major literary event, Bladh pays particular attention to the translation's paratextual features, including a lengthy postscript, and to reviews of the translation in the daily press.

While two of the three articles that consider aspects of modernist drama turn to Ibsen, Dean Krouk's "The Montage Rhetoric of Nordahl Grieg's Interwar Drama" discusses the modernist montage of Nordahl Grieg's 1935 drama *Vår ære og vår makt* (*Our Power and Our Glory*) in the context of Grieg's interest in Soviet theatre and his Communist sympathies. After having shown that Grieg's montage rhetoric consists of abrupt scene shifts as well as grotesque juxtapositions, Krouk concludes that *Vår ære og vår makt* is a notable example of Norwegian, and thus Nordic, appropriation of European modernist and avant-garde theatre.

In "Agents of Secularisation—Ibsen and the Narrative of Secular Modernity", Joachim Schiedermair asks: How can we analyse secularization in modernist texts around 1900? Conceptualizing secularization as a cultural narrative and using Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* as his main example, Schiedermair finds that, rather than reacting to secularization, modernist authors contributed to the formation of the interpretative category "secularization".

While Schiedermair draws on Albrecht Koschorke's theory of secularization as a narrative structure, Irina Ruppo's contribution is aided by reader response theory and theories of intertextuality. In "Exile, Pistols, and Promised Lands: Ibsen and Israeli Modernist Writers", Ruppo considers allusions to Ibsen in the works of two Israeli modernist writers, Amos Oz's autobiographical *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2004) and David Grossman's novel *The Zigzag Kid* (1994) in the context of the Israeli reception of Ibsen in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly that of a production of *Peer Gynt* in 1952 and one of *Hedda Gabler* in 1966. Ruppo concludes that in enlisting Ibsen's help and inspiration in their exploration of the myths of Israeli nationhood, Grossman and Oz expose facets of literary trajectories as they migrate, grow and metamorphose across physical and time-related borders.

Given the fact that poetry plays a key role in modernism, it is appropriate that two contributions highlight this genre. Louise Mønster begins her article, "Dream Poems: The Surreal Conditions of Modernism", by observing that many modernist poems either thematize dreams or try to adopt the form of dreams. She then proceeds to discuss three Swedish dream poems by three Swedish authors affiliated with modernism: Artur Lundkvist, Gunnar Ekelöf and Tomas Tranströmer. That Nordic modernism is not yet over is demonstrated, argues Per Thomas Andersen, by Norwegian poet Øyvind Rimbereid's "Solaris Corrected". In "The Future Modernism of No-Oil Norway: Øyvind Rimbereid's 'Solaris Corrected'", Andersen reads this poem as a poetical science fiction in which Rimbereid uses a future language to present the oil industry in the North Sea from a retrospective perspective. Andersen considers "Solaris Corrected" as a renewal of the heritage from Norwegian modernist poet Rolf Jacobsen and Swedish poet Harry Martinson, particularly Martinson's *Aniara. En revy om människan i tid och rum* ("Aniara: A Review of Man in Time and Space") (1956), a science fiction poem which Andersen regards as a precursor of Rimbereid's "Solaris Corrected".

An understanding of modernism as a complex, and in one sense continuing, international trend constituted by innovative works makes it virtually impossible to define the concept. However, in this Special Issue the concept of modernism works well as a critical tool. The main reason for this kind of critical achievement is that, whether they define modernism or not, the authors make the concept of modernism—and modernisms—work for them in a way that that proves critically productive. Identifying and discussing modernist features of texts written in the Nordic region, and of cultural phenomena such as the circus occurring within that same Nordic region, the authors augment the reader's understanding of Nordic and European modernisms.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Article

Modernism—Borders and Crises

Ástráður Eysteinsson

Department of Comparative Literature, University of Iceland, 102 Reykjavík, Iceland; astra@hi.is

Abstract: This article discusses the concept of modernism, as reflected for instance in attempts to find a manageable narrative frame for the history of literary modernism. The article argues that this attempt is complicated by modernism as an unruly and complex trend that manifests itself in different ways, and at different moments, as it enters into a complex dialogue with other trends within various linguistic communities. These different times and places of modernism also turn out to interact with one another through translations and other forms of reception that sometimes entail renewed modernist creativity. Discussing these significant aspects of modernism, the article also considers the problems critics of modernism face as they attempt to come up with a narrative framework for the history of modernism and its ongoing relationship with realism. A key point argued in the article is that to come to terms with both these trends we need to appreciate the ways in which modernism is linked to historical crises and traumas of our time, including the first and the second world wars. Paying particular attention to the interplay of Nordic and European modernisms, the article discusses how aspects of modernism have manifested themselves in Iceland, a Nordic island which may seem doubly removed from the European centres of modernism in cities such as London and Paris.

Keywords: history of modernism; geography of modernism; literary periods; modernism and realism; modernism and tradition; narrative crisis; translation; reception

Citation: Eysteinsson, Ástráður. 2021. Modernism—Borders and Crises. *Humanities* 10: 76. https://doi.org/10.3390/h10020076

Received: 4 February 2021
Accepted: 6 May 2021
Published: 17 May 2021

1. Introduction

> At the time of the first World War and after—in a Europe unsure of itself, overflowing with unsettled ideologies and ways of life, and pregnant with disaster—certain writers distinguished by instinct and insight find a method which dissolves reality into multiple and multivalent reflections of consciousness. That this method should have been developed at this time is not hard to understand.

These opening words come from Erich Auerbach's classic study, *Mimesis*, or, to be precise, from Willard Trask's translation of Auerbach's German original which was published in 1946. We are in the final chapter, which deals with radical modern forms of the mimetic representation of reality in Western literature. In fact, though, this final chapter concerns itself with the dissolution of realistic representation, and it could be called the chapter on modernism. Auerbach charts what are for him dismal signs of how a continuous sense and representation of reality elude the reader in one challenging modern novel after another. "There is in all these works", he adds, "a certain atmosphere of universal doom: especially in *Ulysses*, with its mocking *odi-et-amo* hodgepodge of the European tradition [. . .]" (Auerbach 1968, p. 551). He goes so far as to suggest that these works manifest hostility towards culture "brought out by means of the subtlest stylistic devices which culture and civilization have developed, and often a radical and fanatical urge to destroy." He notes that these features, including "haziness, vague indefinability of meaning", are "also to be encountered in other forms of art of the same period."[1]

[1] The word Auerbach uses, "Kulturfeindschaft" (Auerbach 1946, p. 492), is rephrased here as hostility towards culture, since I find Trask's strong rendering, "hatred of culture and civilization", somewhat questionable.

This is how the new "method" in the art of fiction is presented in this book which Auerbach wrote during the Second World War. As for the "other forms of art", and music specifically, Thomas Mann could be said to echo salient parts of this portrayal in his novel *Doktor Faustus*, which appeared a year later. Both Auerbach and Mann had been forced into exile by the Nazi reign of terror, and their works are shaped by this experience. In the case of *Mimesis*, this is especially pertinent as the final chapter is concerned: Auerbach's analysis of aesthetic writing that bears on tradition with a destructive force—a force that he links (albeit not in any simple manner) with horrors that he has seen swelling in Europe in his lifetime: in other words, with contemporary history. This perspective is relevant for any discussion of the time of modernism, its history, and its places, along with its challenges in the domain of literary forms and styles of presentation.

It is equally significant that Auerbach does not conclude his inquiry by suggesting that the novel as art form should turn away from this twisted realism. Exploring the seemingly random levels of consciousness unfolding in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*—his key example of this new realism or anti-realism—Auerbach finds a gleam of hope. Something in the method illuminates the way the world of modernity has shrunk, how we may perhaps all be connected. "The strata of societies and their different ways of life have become inextricably mingled. There are no longer even exotic peoples. [. . .] Beneath the conflicts, and also through them, an economic and cultural leveling process is taking place. It is still a long way to a common life of mankind on earth, but the goal begins to be visible. And it is most concretely visible now in the unprejudiced, precise, interior and exterior representation of the random moment in the lives of different people" (Auerbach 1968, p. 552).

It is from within the sphere of these modernist works of fractured space, of "realistic depth" and yet "dissolved reality" that Auerbach looks ahead. Thus, he connects this sphere with his contemporary scene of crisis, shaped by war and devastation and yet also hope for a different future. By concluding this major work, which focuses on the long tradition and legacy of Western mimetic representation of reality, with a chapter on the "destructive" yet probing edge of modernism, Auerbach poses a challenge that is still with us. How has this new literary force fared, and how has it impacted the ongoing mimetic tradition of Western literature?

However, when his book appeared, in 1946, many were undoubtedly certain that this wave of radical and "exploratory type of representation" (Auerbach 1968, p. 552) already belonged to history. That view was to be confirmed, if sometimes hesitantly, by leading scholars in modernist studies as the century wore on, for instance by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane in the symposium *Modernism: 1890–1930* which appeared in 1976 (Bradbury and McFarlane 1976a). Even so, that symposium was born of the strong presence of modernism as a current or movement which had been avidly studied by Western critics, scholars, and students in the decades after World War II. Looking back, one may see a curious double effort at work, where the emphasis to close the period of modernism runs concomitantly with any ever-growing critical and scholarly attention paid to modernism. In the first half of this paper, the Bradbury and McFarlane symposium and the final chapter of Auerbach's *Mimesis* serve as important nodal points from the history of modernist studies. These two critical manifestations of modernism could in fact be said to embrace a 30 year period during which the study of modernism became a major preoccupation of critics and scholars, even though there was (and still is) considerable uncertainty about both the aesthetic borders and the historical and geographic range of this "movement" (as it was sometimes called), and about the crisis this movement or current was often felt to be born of. As I pursue this inquiry, examining the conceptual and historical shape of modernism from several angles, other critical perspectives are gradually brought into this discussion of borders and crises.

As I attempt to trace the challenges involved in both situating and periodising modernism, some of the key questions materialize in a dialogue between Nordic and European/Western modernisms, in which the former is both a part of the latter and yet also

a separate domain with its own disparate units of nations and languages. The Nordic scene saw an early rupture in the notion of what "modern" meant as a term in mapping literature, such that Strindberg can be found to usher in Nordic modernism around 1890. In other Nordic instances, modernism made headway in the 1950s or 1960s. Such "late" breakthroughs are not necessarily belated, and they may still be in possession of the exploratory force and structural challenges of modernism, while also activating the border that both connects it with and separates it from realism and other literary traditions.

The term "border" is used not only in both the temporal sense of *periods* (with their beginnings and ends) and in spatial references to the different *locations* of modernism, but also in referring to the salient aesthetic and historical *borders of modernism and realism*. While they may be to some degree mapped as different entities in the following sections of this essay, these borders significantly intersect with one another while they also feed into a double-narrative crisis—a historical crisis of narratable experiences and narrative paradigms—a crisis that emerges not only in modernist writing but also in critical attempts to embrace the history of modernism.

2. Crossing Borders

Auerbach wrote *Mimesis* in a city loaded with history, a place which has often constituted crossroads of cultural worlds in dialogue or conflict—and still does. From his desk in Istanbul, he cast a glance over the history of Western narrative art, drawing on a selection of works that, from our contemporary point of view, might strike some as "Eurocentric", to use a blame word which often is wielded with scant qualification of its reach. Perhaps I, from my desk in Reykjavík—which like Istanbul can be seen as one of the edges of Europe—should bemoan that Auerbach's "Western" selection does not include one of the Icelandic sagas, brandishing the argument that they are as Western as Homer. However, I could then in fact also argue that Iceland, like many other parts of the geographically "Western" domain, has historically been a part of the "rest" rather than the "West", and that like much of the non-Western world, it stood for centuries in colonial relation to reigning Western powers. The "rest" of the world has certainly been pulled into the maelstrom of the West and the process of modernization it engineered, a process often designated as progress, while it has also been marked by brutality on a global scale and has thrown the world into various situations of crisis. In his closing chapter, Auerbach responds to such a crisis—of history, narrative, form, and consciousness—as it appears in works illustrating that the centre does not hold—to recall Yeats' words from "The Second Coming", a poem written shortly after WWI—and it is relevant that Auerbach's key example is a novel by an author born and raised in the heart of the British Empire—a woman who came to question many of its values and narratives.

The makings of Western modernity were shaped at once by the global activity of ruthless colonialism and the scientific and gradually secularized process of technology, mechanization, and mercantile systems on a grand scale, and also, albeit in the midst of the increased need for administration and control, by the struggle for human rights, democracy, and enlightenment (although generally only for some, not all). While it is tempting to discern in the aesthetics of modernism an acute and potentially critical awareness of both the triumphs and the fragility and failures of Western modernity, including its cultural traditions, it is also obvious what a daunting task it is to find one's heuristic way through such a maze. Among the important elements of aesthetic modernism is arguably its critical stance vis-à-vis instrumental modernization, but this is not an inherently privileged position of modernism. Other strands of modern literature, including realist writing, also grapple critically with the upheaval and disruption entailed in various aspects of social and technological modernity, as do the songs and poems of ethnic groups that get pushed around by modernization, for instance the *jojk* poetry of the Sámi, in which these indigenous "first nations" of another edge of Europe—northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and into Russia—speak out against the severe encroachments on their lands and the disruption of their reindeer herding and other rhythms of their nomadic life style.

The Icelandic poet Einar Bragi (1921–2005) was among those who made a modernist breakthrough in Icelandic poetry in the 1950s, although he was also a master of the traditional forms of poetry against which the modernists clashed. His border-crossing activity is also reflected in his inter-Nordic translations of poetry and drama. He translated some of the poetry of Edith Södergran and especially Gunnar Björling, pioneer modernists of Nordic poetry, but also collections of the major plays of both Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg. In the early 1980s, he came to feel a strong affinity with the Sámi, travelled often and widely through their territories, which they call Sápmi, and devoted much of his creative energy during the last part of his career to translating their poetry. He brought out a total of seven books of Sámi poetry in Icelandic, the last one in 2003.

The closeness to nature in some of this poetry is breathtaking, and now, less than two decades on, it no longer seems surprising that an Icelandic poet-translator should shift his attention from a "central" scene in Nordic literature to the life and pursuits of an "islanded" and threatened people, whose existence becomes a mirror for a wider world that has drastically usurped its natural environment. Einar Bragi finds a place for this poetry in his modernism, extending it to bridge not only the gap between different cultures but also between complexities of feeling and an elemental touch with the environment, although he is also aware how this move harbours sentiments handed down to us from romanticist encounters with nature. Nevertheless, in this regard, Einar Bragi was always—as a friend and colleague in fact once remarked to me about Virginia Woolf—on the "precious side of modernism." Perhaps there is a connection here with the scene Woolf creates in *To the Lighthouse*, where a precarious outside world in reflected in a garden and a house on the Isle of Skye. The title of the final chapter in *Mimesis*, "The Brown Stocking" and the opening scene it alludes to in Woolf's novel, seem, in spite of the "haziness" and the "vague indefinability of meaning", to imply a return to core questions of humanity and preparation for more modest but nonetheless meaningful journeys ahead. This is perhaps what Auerbach means when he talks about a "simple solution" (Auerbach 1968, p. 553): going back to basics, back to the everyday moment, every day being special. It is in Auerbach's final chapter, which is elegiac in its portrayal of a deeply fractured sphere, that the book's epigraph, from Andrew Marvell, finds its deepest resonance: "Had we but world enough and time".

3. Times and Places of the Modern

For Auerbach, the fragmented kind of realism he seeks to come to terms with is not a thing of the past. He involves it in addressing his contemporary world, a world torn and twisted as he writes, having lived through times when Europe as a place of democracy seemed for a while all but lost, and he is, in spite of everything, looking openly to the future. Now, 75 years later, his discussion still raises questions about the times and places of the literary–historical phenomenon he is engaging with. The Nordic countries may often have appeared marginal in relation to the more populous and powerful nations of Europe. Moreover, if geography may be found to reflect this state of affairs, Iceland is a Nordic island which may seem doubly removed from the European centre(s). Does the history of modernism in these outlying regions of Europe contain any useful lessons when it comes to negotiating the function and relevance of this concept? At the turn of the twentieth century, or, say, "in or about December, 1910", to stick with Virginia Woolf,[2] Iceland was one of the poorest countries in Europe. It was slowly wriggling its way out of the colonial grasp of Denmark, but it was still a Nordic backwater, except, arguably, in literary matters. In fact, it could make a rather solid claim about being the place where the medieval Norse culture was most avidly put down in writing. What was it like to observe the rise of modernism from a place seemingly entrenched in a longstanding literary tradition which formed no small part of its claim to independence? As a matter of fact, there were some

[2] The oft-cited phrase, "in or about December, 1910, human character changed" (Woolf 1966, p. 320), one of the better known attempts at temporally marking the onset or breakthrough of modernism, comes from Woolf's 1924 essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown".

interesting modernist experiments in Icelandic literature as early as the 1920s, but for a number of historical reasons, that had for instance to do with an ongoing struggle for full national sovereignty and the reliance of that struggle on an unbroken literary tradition, the scene was not ripe for modernism. In a country teeming with narrative legacies, the novel, as a genre in Icelandic, was still in a fledgling state, although it picked up stream quickly in the second quarter of the century, through both translation and original writing. Thus, with modern realism gradually moving centre stage, the emergence of modernism became a protracted affair, shaped by struggles and interaction between different literary practices. This interaction, involving a variety of expressive forms, is something that I find a fascinating aspect of the history of both modernism and realism, and this essay dwells in part on the salient relationship between these key concepts of modern literature.

Most of the works Auerbach discusses in the final chapter of *Mimesis* appeared in the 1920s. In addition to Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), he touches on Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (A la recherché du temps perdu, 1913–1927), and Gide's *The Counterfeiters* (*Les Faux-monnayeurs*, 1925). It has often been assumed that the aesthetic tremors in works like these and from this period are shaped by the cataclysm of World War I, seen by many as the breakdown of a civilization which supposedly had reached its highest peak in a Europe shaped by the Enlightenment, growing civic liberty, and prosperity. Some aspects of this radicalized aesthetics of modernism, though, have often been traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, to works such as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil* (*Les Fleurs du mal*). In the unusual structural relations between form, representation, content, and implication in these works, scholars have detected forebodings of what was to unfold later, although a historical shift towards modernism is generally not supposed to occur until 1890, or even as late as 1910, and many of the signature works of modernism are frequently not seen to emerge until the 1920s—prominent works being, for instance, *Ulysses* and Eliot's *The Waste Land* from the often termed "annus mirabilis", 1922.

However, scholars are not likely to be unanimous in drawing such historical boundaries or fault lines or in pinpointing individual watershed works. The relevance of *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* may ride in part on the ever-growing international prominence of the English language since the early twentieth century, and when one starts looking in other quarters, the groundbreaking works of modernism manifest a variety of different turns and tunes—in different languages and emerging at different times—although many of them certainly did appear in the wake of the First World War.

When Auerbach was deliberating the dissolution of outer reality in the works of Virginia Woolf and other authors, the critical debate about this trend had been under way for some time, often under the rubric of the *avant-garde* or its various individual groups. In addition, such unrest and attempts at new departures in the works and world of literature were frequently signalled with a special emphasis on the words *new* or *modern*, for instance in English-, French-, or German-language discourse (also as nouns, e.g., *die Moderne* in German)—it was *modern* with an implied stress, indicating a departure from literary traditions. These variations in the meaning of "modern" are as relevant as they can be slippery. They had been employed differently by the Danish scholar and critic Georg Brandes as early as 1871 in the phrase "The modern breakthrough" ("Det moderne gennembrud") which came to stand for a crucible of ideas and discourses, literature as well as non-fiction, over the next two decades, marking a break with conservative, authoritarian views, and opening Scandinavian culture and public debate to the liberal politics, scientific theories, and social criticism which had been on the move in Europe for some time. Significantly, a part of this breakthrough consisted in translations: the writer J.P. Jacobsen translated Darwin into Danish, while Brandes himself translated John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*.

However, Brandes felt that literature itself should also be a platform for public debate, tackling the problems of modern society.[3] It should not be surprising that this Scandinavian modern breakthrough was strongly represented by realist and naturalist writing. Nevertheless, in the long run, and as it spread to the other Nordic countries, especially Norway and Sweden, it did not turn out to be a streamlined movement at all and could even be described as a cauldron of ideas, approaches, and expressions in motion—and this can also be said of the ideas and opinions of Brandes himself. While this modern breakthrough helped feed the main trajectory of literary realism into the twentieth century, it also fostered elements of neo-romanticism and symbolism, and literary ventures that seemed to be driven by psychological energies more than obvious social concerns—or perhaps they met head-to-head, as in Knut Hamsun's novel *Sult* (Hunger 1890). The two writers most important for and illustrative of the dimensions of this breakthrough, also broke into the international limelight in the last quarter of the nineteenth century: The Norwegian Henrik Ibsen and the Swede August Strindberg. It is in no small measure because of their modern "unrest" that it has seemed propitious to search in this Nordic cauldron for early signs of the shift towards modernism.

The meaning of the word "modern" was thus in considerable flux in the latter half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth (and perhaps still is). The term "modernism" as such, however, was not regularly or widely used in Europe until well into the twentieth century, for instance in English and in the Nordic languages. Important elements in the early debate about avant-garde art and literature took place in what are often called "little magazines" which frequently brought together experimental literary works, aesthetic manifestoes, and critical commentaries. Concomitantly, scholarly exploration gradually increased, and in retrospect, it seems obvious that the discussion surrounding modernism, especially in the post-WWII era, is in various ways closely tied to the expansion of literary scholarship within the academy, in particular as it pertains to the enhanced presence of modern literature as part of the university curriculum.

However, if modernism is at once an object and a concept of the history of literature and the other arts, how do we make use of the concept in getting a *historical grasp* on relevant phenomena, their qualities, and contexts, in space and time? Can it be called a "movement" and allotted both a place and a period within which it can be observed and studied at a certain historical distance? The concept of modernism has long been employed for such demarcation. The widely read symposium *Modernism* from 1976, edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, was probably the most influential book in modernist studies in the last quarter of the twentieth century (and at the same time, it helped firmly anchor "modernism" as a concept within English, which was rapidly securing its place as the new academic lingua franca). The book's subtitle was simply *1890–1930*. It was published by Penguin Books as part of the series *Pelican Guides to European Literature* and one could therefore assume that this period in European literary history was in some crucial sense under the aegis of modernism. This was strongly underscored in 1991 when the book was reprinted with a new preface and a cover where the words "*A Guide to European Literature*" had been inserted between the two parts of the (previous) title: "*Modernism*" and "*1890–1930*". The additional "European" emphasis sits a little awkwardly with the fact that North America is part of the territory covered by the book. The actual title page of the book, though, remained unchanged (Bradbury and McFarlane 1991a).[4]

It is worth taking a close look at this volume as a precursor to subsequent activity in modernist studies, up to the present. Bradbury and McFarlane's symposium can be seen as confirming Fredric Jameson's oft-quoted phrase: "We cannot not periodize" (Jameson 2002, p. 29), but it also illustrates how the defining traits of what we refer to as "periods" are sometimes units in motion, aesthetic and cultural paradigms whose shapes and times are determined by cultural geography. The scope of the volume is not limited

[3] For an extensive portrayal of Brandes in English, see Oskar Seidlin (1942).

[4] The new front cover, with what thus has the look of an expanded subtitle, is adorned with the portraits of nine writers, four of whom are American: Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens, Ernest Hemingway, and Marianne Moore.

to Anglo-American literature, as was often the case in books about modernism written in English.[5] An ambitious attempt is made to pull together threads from a wide spectrum of European and to some extent American literature. This volume, like Auerbach's book, is clearly "Eurocentric", a designation that is in fact often made to include North America. Nonetheless, this is how the book is deliberately mapped out, and in the 1991 preface, Bradbury and McFarlane emphasize that "in the opening phases of the Modern movement the centre was unmistakably in Europe. European ideas and ideals, European dissents and crises, European developments and disorders, fed it" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1991b, p. 14).

Apart from introductory essays, this almost 700 page book is divided into three parts. A special section on the "Geography of Modernism" focuses on cities portrayed as prominent in the experiential world of modernism, i.e., Berlin, Paris, Vienna, Prague, Chicago, New York, and London. This is followed by a section of seven articles on individual literary movements of modernism, from symbolism through imagism, vorticism, futurism, and expressionism, to dada and surrealism. The second half of the book comprises 17 articles on modernism in poetry, the novel, and drama, frequently with an emphasis on works by key authors (mostly men), such as Rilke, Valéry, Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Thomas Mann, Proust, Kafka, Joyce, Strindberg, Brecht, and Pirandello. Elements of certain works are examined, but the process involves a portrayal of central authors, a modernist canon, or what some might want to see as a fleshing out of "high modernism". Although the use of that elevated category is often loose and unclear, it frequently seems to be two-pronged—referring to a *group* of eminent and firmly canonized writers during a certain *period*.

4. Distant Reading

The revision of modernism carried out in the early years of the twenty-first century involves a critique of both the geography and canon of modernism as it is staged for instance in Bradbury and McFarlane's book. In various studies of modernism, for instance recent attempts to map its manifestations in the Nordic countries, scholars have pointed out modernist innovations and interventions outside the beaten track of the Western cities that have been in the limelight, while also directing attention to authors other that those most discussed under this category. Such revision frequently involves untying the latter end of the period, illustrating how modernism constituted a breakthrough force *after* 1930.

From a present-day perspective, the book *Modernism: 1890–1930* might seem open to the objection that it "appropriates" this period, these four decades of literary history, by overemphasizing certain literary currents at the cost of others that also played a significant role within this time frame. There is, however, no indication that Bradbury and McFarlane were seeking a broad-based historical survey of the period; their primary aim was to map the main traits of modernism or "the Modern movement", as they also call it, which "transformed consciousness and artistic form" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1991b, p. 11). It could still be argued that the volume makes a claim to the period on behalf of the innovatory aesthetic achievements of modernism, and it is obvious that the publisher later made such a move with the new front-cover presentation of the book in 1991, tuning in with several other scholarly publications that actually go as far as to state that modernism was a *dominant* force in this period. This exemplifies a skewing motion that sometimes characterises the documentation of past literary history. In fact, the editors themselves open their new preface to the 1991 reprint by saying that their book has become "a key textbook on international literary Modernism" in the course of the past decade and a half, and that during this time the "Modern movement" has drawn "vastly more interest" and is "now generally seen as the dominant spirit in early-twentieth century art and literature" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1991b, p. 11).

[5] This has changed dramatically since then, with the universal push to publish academic works in English, a push that could be called double-edged, at least in the humanities, where individual local languages are often strongly intertwined with the topics at hand and have shaped their discursive environments.

This is a highly interesting case of how an act of distant reading embraces forces entering and challenging the field and shifts them *retrospectively* to centre stage. Such an approach may make the period in question more manageable and more teachable, but this mapping risks ignoring actual mainstream activity in the period under discussion as well as missing the dialogue between different currents and methods. Significantly, it also risks presenting an unduly sedate view of the challengers, including the "high modernists" that appear to tower over the literary neighbourhood which they were in fact often struggling against during the time in question.

While an emphasis on innovation within any designated period casts a significant light on literary history, a different kind of distant reading may show that doing so stringently can obstruct broader insight into that particular historical stretch, not only in terms of the book market and other scenes of literary culture but also concerning the recapturing of the "literary institution" and its various levers of recognition and value.[6] I will attempt a simple exercise in viewing the period 1890–1930 without modernist eyeglasses. In British fiction, for instance, this is noticeably the time of H.G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, and Somerset Maugham. In addition, across the Atlantic, we come across writers such as Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, and Pearl S. Buck. All these British and American writers were prominent and highly regarded during this time; in fact, four of them were awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. However, given Bradbury and McFarlane's outlined premises, it may stand to reason that these writers do in fact *not* figure prominently in their book. We might think they had been dealt with in another volume in the same series, i.e., *The Age of Realism* (edited by F.W.J. Hemmings) which came out 1974. However, that book focuses on nineteenth-century realists, and the end of that century seems to coincide with the end of the age of realism.

However, realism did flourish in the early twentieth century, and after 1930, a new generation had emerged on the scene, in Britain for instance Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, and George Orwell. Thus, we can go on—also with examples from other languages—in underpinning the argument that mainstream fiction in the Western world in the first half of the twentieth century is of a realist rather than a modernist bent. Writing in 1959, Raymond Williams mentions the view or idea that realism "went out with the hansom cab", wondering what this means in practice. "For clearly, in the overwhelming majority of modern novels, including those novels we continue to regard as literature, the ordinary criteria of realism still hold" (Williams 1959, p. 202). These criteria are resilient; I think it is safe to say that they have stayed strong throughout the twentieth century and up to the present day and that this also pertains to most branches of literature that are sometimes designated as popular culture—and it is ultimately hopeless and useless to try to find a clear line separating such literature from works that receive more critical or academic recognition.

Perhaps this situation is something that critics and scholars take for granted, unless they silently assume that "traditional realism"—I realize that the term may seem scandalously vague—is actually obsolete. In any case, it almost comes as a surprise, in this day and age, to see its relevance acknowledged, as is the case in Robert Eaglestone's useful introductory book *Contemporary Fiction* from 2013: "Realism is the dominant form of the novel", he states bluntly and clearly finds that it has been so for a long time. In fact, it seems that the strength and resilience of realism is so conspicuous, its place so secure, that it can be referred to as the obvious standard against which other motions can be measured. In addressing contemporary fiction specifically, Eaglestone writes, "Of course, the majority of novels published are realist, but there seem to be, as I've suggested, three sorts of areas of challenge to this realism special to the last ten years or so." One of these is a "demolition of the barriers between the realms of fiction and non-fiction writing," an interesting transgression which may disturb, if only slightly, the strong status of traditional mimesis in the various domains of non-fictional narrative of which we are indirectly but usefully

[6] The term "distant reading" is borrowed from Franco Moretti's article "Conjectures on World Literature" (Moretti 2002) and his book *Distant Reading* from 2013, although I may bend the term a little to suit my argumentative context.

reminded here, since they play a significant background role in our various encounters with literary texts. Another challenge, interestingly, involves a step back, as it were—"a retreat from the wilder edges of postmodernism towards a stronger sense of narrative. This retreat, however, has not forgotten the lesson of postmodern fiction: these texts are still playful, still complex over issues like textuality and closure." This understanding of postmodernism owes more than a little to the legacy of modernism, and a third area of challenge does in fact manifest "a renewed interest in techniques of high modernism, associated with Woolf and Joyce" (Eaglestone 2013, pp. 8, 23)."[7] All these challenges, in the early years of the twenty-first century are by implication seen as confronting a realist mainstream, which breeds and feeds our narrative consciousness along with other sign systems in the symbolic order embracing us (see also David James 2012).

Has modernism perhaps retained, up to the present, its challenging status vis-à-vis long-lived realist paradigms, even though—or indeed because—realism has obviously found various ways of renewing itself? One of the defining features of modernist literature is in my view the complication, if not breakdown, of narratives—not necessarily of sequentiality as such, but of prevalent narrative referentiality, including the various codes and contracts involving both receivers and makers of literature. Many avant-garde literary practices can be fairly described in terms of narrative crisis. This is a crisis of the process or proceedings ("Prozess", to cite the title of a Kafka novel, which also means "trial") of the literary text in relation to individual identities and historical contexts—including the reader's reconstruction of the links between text, identity, and history. Nevertheless, this very crisis foregrounds the urgency of capturing the relationship of modernist texts to historical circumstances and periods, as borne out in countless studies of modernism. Historical mappings of modernism as an aesthetic paradigm or "movement" partly spring from and in turn influence the reception of various individual modernist works and practices. These different levels of reception tend to situate their findings within historical-narrative frameworks, even when the modernist works in question—in the possibly radical dispersal of their non-organic units—may seem to defy such narrative groundings.

These are, of course, roughly drawn and un-nuanced dimensions of a struggle, and it not hard to understand the tendency to contain such a crisis; to wrap modernism up as something that happened between 1890 and 1930, even while admitting that it is "still, in some fashion, a shaping art behind the art of our own times" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1991b, p. 12), or perhaps also to stave realism off as mainly a nineteenth century affair. Unless realism is taken to be "dominant but dead", to use words with which modernism was once laid to rest in the 1980s (see Foster 1983, p. ix). However, both these spectres are still very much with us.

5. The Border of Realism and Modernism

The above discussion may at times seem to imply that there is a clear and obvious border between modernism and realism. This is not the case. In all their significance, this border is often quite blurred. The density of discourse, structure, and reference in the last novels of Henry James, and in some of the works of E.M. Forster and Joseph Conrad, along with a seemingly realist narrative framework, may appear to open these texts up in both directions. Some of Ernest Hemingway's narrative works reside in a similar but different border area. Hamsun's novel *Hunger*, as already mentioned, is an early and very important case in point. Thomas Mann is an author who has been found vital to both modernism and realism. *The Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg* 1924) is frequently seen as one of the key novels of modernism. In an article by J.P. Stern in Bradbury and McFarlane's *Modernism* (Stern 1976), Mann's career is interpreted as a trajectory towards modernism, with early signs already in the novel *Buddenbrooks* (1901)—which might seem to open up the gates of modernism quite drastically. Others have viewed Mann as a renewer of realism. The Marxist scholar Georg Lukács saw Mann's career as an exemplary route of modern realism

[7] Eaglestone lists these three challenges in a different order, but their sequence is not significant in this context.

and placed it in historical opposition to what he saw as the modernist aberrations of Franz Kafka—although he is also aware of Kafka's masterful realist strokes (Lukács 1958).

The border and the interplay of realism and modernism are important for our understanding of the history of modern Western literature and concomitantly for the ways in which we weigh the role of modernism in the short and long term. Of course, the interpretive approach of the respective reader also weighs in heavily. Some may read Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* as an example of the transformative capacities of realism, others as the extended birth of a one of the outstanding mind-worlds of modernist literature.

Such an approach, however dialectic, may seem to risk further entrenching an already oversimplifying dichotomy, especially in the realm of fiction. What about science fiction and the multifarious works sometimes grouped under the terms *fantasy, the fantastic*, or *speculative fiction* which have for some time been a major presence in Western literature and film? Certainly, literature and literary history need to be approached from a number of angles, and it is obvious that a great host of literary works are not "realist" in the sense that the world they portray matches the prevalent reality models of Western rationalism. However, if we accept the verisimilitude of such works, we tend to agree to a whole narrative scenario which in turn, however, often proves to be under the control of traditional motions and patterns.

Perhaps it even needs to be stressed that those who are drawn to literary modernism and its various ruptures are not automatically antagonistic to the fluidity or sequentiality of narrative. It may sound like a contradiction, but this narrative drive may be among the factors constituting the narrative crisis of modernist literature, in which classical narrative shifts may veer into real "interruptions". The *time* inherent in the text turns into *place*, as it were—a place of contemplation, uncertainty, figuration, and the emergence of other narrative threads, which also impacts the self-awareness of the reader. It is this interruption which Italo Calvino explores and throws so brilliantly into action (and counteraction) in the novel *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (If on a Winter's Night a Traveller, 1979). Such metafictional self-consciousness was sometimes designated as "postmodernist" when it became prevalent in the late twentieth century, but it has been a feature of modernism throughout. As for constant narrative interruption, there are interesting similarities between this work by Calvino and Veijo Meri's *Manillaköysi* (1957; The Manilla Rope), an important novel in the history of Finnish modernism and one that has been translated into several languages (Riikonen 2007, p. 853).

A fascinating but more recent work with strong modernist traits that are structurally and thematically interwoven with techniques and aesthetics of communication is the English writer Tom McCarthy's novel *C* from 2010. McCarthy is very much in touch with the history of modernism and has been quoted as saying that to "ignore the avant garde is akin to ignoring Darwin" (Purdon 2010). Although *C* was well received by some, the response of the critic Christopher Tayler in *The Guardian* is an indication that modernism has not become as ingrained in the literary system as one might think. According to Tayler, this is an unusual novel, one that has taken aboard both high modernism and continental philosophy. He finds it refreshing that McCarthy has gone against the grain of contemporary literary culture which is "stubbornly non-modernistic". Tayler appears to speak from within that culture when he notes that given the company the author keeps, one may expect the novel to be a "bit pretentious, in the style of Deleuze-loving architecture theorists or Lacan-quoting gallery notes. This suspicion isn't totally off the mark, yet McCarthy is a talented and intelligent novelist; however pretension-prone the scene he's interested in might be, his writing is tight and lucid, and he has a functioning sense of humour" (Tayler 2010).

The same year, on the other side of the Atlantic, the novel *Freedom* appeared, written by Jonathan Franzen, who had enjoyed rapid success, as reflected in his picture on the cover of *Time*, along with a familiar and time-word phrase: "Great American Novelist" (*Time*, Vol. 176, No. 8, 23 August 2010). Franzen has been unabashedly frank in his critique of modernism and experimental writing, and his accomplished novels are sometimes

compared to the works of Dickens and Tolstoy, as if nothing is less pretentious in our time than the company of these high chiefs of the nineteenth-century novel. Can the making of narrative fiction in our time be directly linked to the realist tradition of the nineteenth century, as if there had been no modernist "interruption" along the way? Franzen's realist prose is of course shaped by the contemporary American reality he writes about and a matrix of modern textuality, and yet, it rests on traditional underpinnings that have come down to us through turbulent times in (literary) history and still carry significant weight.

Nonetheless, it is interesting, in this context, to look at another recent American novel whose author also has a firm grasp of realist discourse yet brings it into a charged dialogue with modernism—I am referring to *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy. When the modernist narrative crisis proves fertile, it is in no small part due to the creative activity of readers moving in a certain empty space between the "troubled" text and the mimetic reality they need to reconstruct as a kind of subtext in the work—perhaps most modernist works are double-coded in this sense. It is a challenge to travel through Joyce's *Ulysses*, but at the end of the journey, readers have contributed significantly to the city and the community they have encountered. In Cormac McCarthy's novel, this is turned around in a crucial sense, although it is a travel story as indicated by the title. Here, the background of the narrative, along with its various modern premises, has either vanished or lies in ruins: even memories cannot recall it. In *The Road*, the impact on the reader stems from a text which is realist in its surface details but moves eerily in a world which is at once new and lost, stimulating a surging yet troubling sensitivity in those grasping for the firmness that such texts tend to deliver.

The border of realism and modernism—however unclear it may be at times, but also because of that lack of clarity—is in my view crucial for those seeking to come to terms with the shape of modernism as a current in literary history. This shape—or in other words, the history of modernism—is itself presently going through a narrative crisis, almost as if scholarship were re-enacting the troubled terms of modernist fiction. What gets called realism in narrative fiction certainly has major touchstones in the nineteenth century but is also broadly understood as drawing in a continuous manner on the mimetic functions of language and other sign systems. The use of language in realist literary works is thus related to the verisimilitude of general socio-practical discourses, while modernism tends towards skirting or undermining various rationalized links that constitute the "representation of reality", to use Auerbach's phrase.

This is most definitely not to say that realists base their works on simple notions of the relationship between reality and language. Great realist writers have always been able to create multi-levelled narrative worlds and multifaceted views of reality. Moreover, as mentioned already, this is a matter of interpretive approach—for reading strategies can also be analysed in the respective terms. Jonathan Culler once wrote that we can read Flaubert as a realist or a modernist—and he chose to approach him as a modernist (Culler 1982).[8] Much could be said here about modernism and the act of reading against the grain. However, I do not think that the employment of modernism as a general strategy of reading and interpreting various kinds of texts needs in itself challenge the argument that the border of realism and modernism, while an easy prey of deconstruction, is important in making sense of the modern literary landscape, especially as narrative is concerned (including the various narrative implications and subtexts of poetry). Even if someone were to carry out a brilliant reading of Dickens as a modernist (probably someone already has), I do not think this would change Dickens' position as a major realist author. I think the same holds true for Henrik Ibsen. Toril Moi has argued in a recent book that Ibsen deserves to be seen as an important modernist writer, and her arguments are in no small measure

[8] See (Eysteinsson 1990, pp. 190–91) and the broader discussion in that chapter about the connections between realism and modernism.

based on dismantling or bypassing the differences between realism and modernism as modern textualities (Moi 2006).[9]

6. The Edge

While the border of realism and modernism can arguably in itself be seen as a significant if constantly shifting tradition, modernism as a force in literary history is also shaped by its crisis-prone and searching edge. From this angle, as even Bradbury and McFarlane acknowledge, there is much in modernism that "remains contentious, perplexing or simply obscure, so that the larger map still stays vague" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1991b, p. 12), although it may seem tempting to clarify the map by drawing a firm line between the experimental and performative group activities of the *avant-gardes* and the individual achievements of certain *modernists*, those "certain writers distinguished by instinct and insight", as Auerbach puts it.

Fredric Jameson has in fact argued that it is possible to identify four historical "moments or tendencies" of modernism, a kind of evolution from symbolism and other stirrings at the end of the nineteenth century, to early twentieth-century avant-gardes, but to these "should be added the modernism of the isolated "genius," organized [. . .] around the great Work, the Book of the World" (Jameson 1991, p. 305), a description that would seem to fit modernists such as James Joyce and Ezra Pound.[10] However, Pound's career is a good example of how questionable such categorization can be: not only did he participate in avant-garde group activities, but his story as author is marked by the importance of social and aesthetic connections or networks for modernists that swam against the tide. Pound's historical importance lies not only in his poetry, but also in his contribution as editor and intermediary. His editing of Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*—an avant-garde intervention in its own right and enormously important in and for the history of modernist poetry—has sometimes been described in terms of midwifery. Work of this kind was in fact often carried out by women, who as supporters, assistants, editors, co-workers, or even publishers of modernists who met little or no response from leading publishers of the time; women who themselves were important writers, for instance Gertrude Stein, or had other roles in the literary world, such as bookseller Sylvia Beach, the first publisher of Joyce's *Ulysses*.[11]

In pulling modernism into perspective within the broad context of literary culture and focusing on its experimental, critical, and often controversial dynamic, one must not forget that it had from the start important supporters, both among writers and others within the field of literary culture, and this support grew steadily among critics and literary scholars. While modernism has not been a dominant current in the Western literary marketplace in the past hundred years, it gradually moved into a crucial position within the scholarly community, especially when the academy started shoring up cultural fragments in the wake of the Second World War, to echo T.S. Eliot's words about poetic creativity at the end of *The Waste Land*. Certain modernists, authors such as Joyce, Eliot, Woolf, Kafka, Proust, and Beckett, have now for decades received a great deal of close attention which manifests that scholars and critics find in their works—in the formal expression and provocative connections between consciousness and reality—responses to modernity that demand thorough examination and interpretation. I cannot myself deny perceiving this attraction of modernist works, although I am also aware that these critical ventures take readers down various and different roads; the "messages" are often murky.

Hence, I also read signs of the times in Auerbach's responses and in his very decision to focus especially on such writings in the final chapter of *Mimesis*. Rather than directing his attention to recent works that draw on the trajectory of the realist-mimetic tradition, he

[9] I should stress that although I think Ibsen is a key realist author in the history of modern drama, this does not detract from his important role in a transition period which played a significant role in the emergence of modernism. I find it interesting, in this regard, to see how Inga-Stina Ewbank places Ibsen in the company of Henry James (Ewbank 2002).

[10] Jameson's fourth stage or moment is "late modernism"—more on that later in this article.

[11] In recent years a good number of books have appeared that highlight the roles of women in the history of modernism and its whole cultural environment. Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank* (Benstock 1986), remains among the most important studies of this kind.

looks to more structurally elusive and seemingly open-ended forms of expression. In this realism at the edge, or in its fracturing of traditional mimesis, Auerbach notes a radical response to modernity but also new attempts to convey perception, and thus, he broaches the melting pot of various modernist endeavours. Some avant-gardists declared their animosity towards traditions, and those who sought their material in the cultural heritage strove to reshape it or "make it new", as Pound famously put it, whereby he had in mind some quite radical modes of cultural translation.

In 1942, the poet Steinn Steinarr wrote an article about the painter Þorvaldur Skúlason—both were modernist trailblazers in their respective fields in Iceland. Steinarr claims that modern art must aim "to broaden the sphere which is defined by artistic knowledge and the artistic capacity of its creators" (Steinarr 1942). In his view, artists must, by exploring and experimenting, push their own borders and those of their art, as if seeking to touch the unknown. This may risk breaking prevalent aesthetic contracts and conventions, and there is a potentially destructive force built into such endeavours, as Auerbach points out. In some sense, this is creativity driven by crisis. Steinarr's own creative crisis, in his best-known work, the poem-cycle *Tíminn og vatnið* (Time and Water 1948), did not involve taking radical leave of the classical elements of Icelandic poetry, as is often the case in modernist poetry. Instead, he played these time-hallowed instruments—metric schemes, rhyme, alliteration, and rhythm—but without making them get a hold of his language and meaning, which might seem to flutter every which way. In this manner, he explored and reignited the sphere of both the music and the imagery of Icelandic poetry, opening formal expression to new knowledge.

This emphasis on the expansion of artistic expression may be seen as a one of the primary forces of modernism, especially when it appears in radical rupture or fragmentation of traditional expressive forms. However, in this regard as well, modernist literature spans a wide spectrum, from an apparent overabundance to minimalist asceticism. Such challenges can be a driving force in innovative, avant-garde work, but they entail no inherent guarantee for aesthetic achievement, howsoever that may be measured. The aesthetic appraisal of modernism has been under some scrutiny in recent years, and there are those who feel that the emphasis on form, innovation, and the rupturing of traditions has enjoyed privileges which need to be rescinded. This view is sometimes tied to attempts to broaden the concept of modernism, aligning it with modernity in broad cultural terms, rather than aesthetic ones, but some recent critics also tend to hang on to a more narrowly defined notion of modernist aesthetics when dovetailing it with "formalism". Thus, the editors of *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* write in their introduction: "The formalist approach to literature and the visual arts was perfectly suited to linguistically complex writing and to abstract painting and was thus to a great extent responsible for the critical valorization of modernism, out of which the New Criticism had itself emerged" (Brooker et al. 2010, p. 7).

It is certainly fair to say that formal analysis has played a significant role in the valorisation of various works and authors associated with modernism, but formal analysis is by no means the exclusive domain of the New Critics. Moreover, missing here is the awareness that we saw in Steinn Steinarr's previously quoted statement, of how the epistemological aspects of art may be thrown into sharp relief when prevalent borders of expression are challenged. Literature and the other arts are domains of knowledge as much as form, and it may not always be easy to separate the two. Meticulous attention to form plays a salient part in the approach of some who have grappled with the cultural discordance and the social contexts of modernist art, for instance Theodor Adorno, whose book *Aesthetic Theory* (Adorno 1970) focuses substantially on modern art and is a highly relevant contribution to modernist studies. Adorno finds formal radicalism vis-à-vis traditions and prevalent patterns of communication to be vital to modernism, and he goes as far as saying that there is within modernism an inherent negative attitude to, and even rejection of, tradition (Adorno 1970, p. 38). This may, ironically, appear to echo Auerbach's view of modernism, although in Adorno's case this stems from his highly critical view of conventions and modes of expression which have thrived under the double-edged

legacy of the Enlightenment and instrumentalised social patterns rooted in the Western world. I concur with Adorno that the critical dynamic of modernism constitutes an edge, a negativity which inclines against all tradition. In this edge reside in my view both the merits and the severity of modernism. That edge may be directed against mandates and directives, against stagnant conventions in behaviour, expression, and mindset, against various forms of orthodoxy. That said, there is no reason to assume a negative attitude to all traditions. Rigorous negativity can result in turning a blind eye to the values and resources of traditions, and their modes of adaptability to new times and conditions.

In some of her essays from the 1920s, Virginia Woolf was highly critical of the prominent British novelists Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells. These challenging views do not come from someone who was among the "dominant" writers of that time (to refer to my previous discussion). Woolf directs an edge towards centrally reigning traditions and realist methods that she associated with "ruin" and "death" (Woolf 1966, 1972). The sharp wording is reminiscent of some of the avant-garde manifestoes, proclaiming and seeking to enact an artistic revolt. Perhaps we cannot expect those struggling for new creative space to dwell on the tenacity and adaptability of traditions. "In the arts there is no way back", to quote one of the most memorable declarations from the struggle for modernist space in Icelandic literature. It dates from 1955 and is the title of a preface that the poet Einar Bragi, who has already been discussed above, wrote for the first issue of *Birtingur*, a journal that sought to promote an awareness of aesthetic modernity across the artistic fields (Einar Bragi 1955, p. 25). It may seem obvious that a spiritless repetition of older forms of expression is not a promising way forward, but one could also argue that there are several ways to re-explore certain travelled routes, even while heading forward. Along with his co-editors—including the writer Thor Vilhjálmsson, who helped spearhead the "late" breakthrough of the Icelandic modernist novel in the late 1960's and into the 70's—Einar Bragi managed to run *Birtingur* continuously until 1968 as a platform for various kinds of modernist activity, inquiry, translation, critical discussion, and new Icelandic writing. Avoiding the local contests created by the (political and cultural) cold war, the journal managed to push the frontiers of both critical and aesthetic space in Iceland.

Modernism's urge to keep pushing its creative frontier is sometimes discussed with reference to the career of James Joyce: how he moved from his early narrative works to just about toppling the form of the novel as a genre in *Ulysses* and then went beyond that point in *Finnegans Wake* (1939), raising questions about the limits of the genre and about how one can go on experimenting with language. These questions have been prevalent ever since. While many find *Finnegans Wake* to be a master stroke of modern literature, one is hard put denying that it radically foregrounds the narrative crisis which is rife in modernism, although the crisis rarely reaches this extent. The Czech author Ivan Klíma says in his essay "Our Tradition and the Limits of Growth", that literature and the arts have already reached the outermost edge of innovation; that Joyce and Beckett took originality to the borders of incomprehensibility, which is as far as literary expeditions can take us (Klíma 1994, pp. 149–50).

It is not hard to understand this sentiment, but the borders of incomprehensibility are hardly to be drawn with any such clarity, and the history of modernism is not a single or straight road leading to such borders. I am tempted to react in similar terms to the question whether modernism has not itself inevitably become a tradition, given that some of the key experimental works of modernism have been around for a hundred years. This can be answered in the affirmative: works of Joyce, Woolf, Beckett, and other modernists have been continuously and intensely explored and discussed by scholars for decades now, and may, in these circles, be among the best-known items in their repertoire. At the same time, however, it seems highly unlikely that modernism has, in the wider realm of reading and writing, become a tradition in a traditional sense.

Whether it is due to an inherent conservatism of language or the strong mainstream of narrative traditions up to the present (and the two may be intertwined), radical modernism has maintained its estrangement in the public sphere. It has not become an openly accepted

paradigm in the "representation of reality in Western literature" and this may help explain the elasticity of the concept of modernism up to the present time. This does not mean that new authors can repeat previous works of modernism, but the uncanny "tradition of modernism" may strikingly elucidate the diversity and the maze of "rewriting" and the innovative potential within the field of literature. This is relevant when accounting for the situation of authors that go against the mainstream at different times, whether it be Guðbergur Bergsson in the novel *Tómas Jónsson. Metsölubók* (*Tómas Jónsson: Bestseller*) in 1966 or Tom McCarthy in *C* in 2010. Both have recourse to the storehouse of previous modernist exploits and make their own use of them in challenging works, although *C* is clearly not as much of a "game changer" in British fiction as *Tómas Jónsson* was in Iceland in the sixties. Modernism enters a complex dialogue within each linguistic community, depending on time and place. This is a major issue in the history of modernism if we want to come to terms with it as an international phenomenon—and it does so in no small part by rubbing up against the heritage and development of narrative realism, which has itself of course often learnt from the twists and turns of modernism, while both have also kept their eyes on other streams of social discourse.

7. Finding a Beginning . . .

My above description of the parallel existence of modernist and realist practices may seem to clash with approaches that emphasize the successions of movements, with each one being an active and sometimes dominant force within a certain period. Looking back to the period of 1890–1930, it is worthwhile taking a closer look at how Bradbury and McFarlane, in the *Modernism* volume, describe the scene of the "Modern Movement" in their lead article, "The Name and Nature of Modernism". This is a rich essay, teeming with observations that often jostle uncomfortably against one another, which in itself evinces the challenge of the task at hand. It opens with a discussion of "cultural seismology", the third and most radical degree of which involves "overwhelming dislocations" and "cataclysmic upheavals of culture" that "question an entire civilization or culture"—and "we have [. . .] increasingly come to believe that this new art comes from, or is, an upheaval of the third and cataclysmic order" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1976b, pp. 19–20). The authors then touch on "attempts to locate the Great Divide", such as Roland Barthes' statement, in his book *Writing Degree Zero* from 1953, that around 1850 classical writing disintegrated "'and the whole of literature, from Flaubert to the present day, became the problematics of language'" (pp. 20–21).

This is how the essay opens, with modernism and its style seen as characterized by "the shock, the violation of expected continuities, the element of de-creation and crisis" (p. 24), along with other arguments "as to why Modernism is our art; it is the one art that responds to the scenario of our chaos" (p. 27). Then, some argumentative backtracking kicks in, for it "is clear" that "not all artists have believed this to be so—that indeed, ours has been a century not only of derealization but of realism, not only of ironic but of expansive modes" (p. 27). Followed by: "Today it must surely seem to us that the truth lies somewhere between the view that Modernism is the supreme modern expression and the view that it is of marginal importance" (p. 28).

This sounds like a most elusive truth, to say the least, one that furthermore lies in the past, for instead of "Modernism is our art" we are now told that "Modernism *was* indeed an international movement [. . .]" (p. 30; emphasis added). As we move into the argumentation, the more it strives, at times admirably, to contain this beast of a "movement", to put it in its proper place. In fact, *place* is a key issue in this discussion, and the authors acknowledge that modernism "viewed from a New York-London-Paris axis" may not rhyme with its signatures in "Berlin, or Vienna, or Copenhagen, or Prague, or St Petersburg", and the attention subsequently shifts to "Germanic Modernism", including the Scandinavian "modern breakthrough" mentioned above and its connection with Germany, and especially Berlin as a cultural centre. One of the two authors, James McFarlane, is here in familiar territory, being a specialist in Scandinavian Studies and an Ibsen expert.

As the authors try "to pin Modernism down ", Georg Brandes is mentioned as a key player in making "the epithet 'modern' [. . .] a rallying slogan of quite irresistible drawing power" (p. 37), but when this German–Scandinavian scene is scrutinized, there emerges at some point a significant shift in the meaning and reference of "modern". This is a kind of "reorientation", a "Wendepunkt", occurring "about the year 1890" (p. 40). "To get at a quality of this change", the authors take a "roll call": "When, in the early 1880s, Georg Brandes wrote of the 'modern minds' [. . .] of whom did he speak? Of Ibsen and Bjørnson, of Jacobsen and Drachmann, of Flaubert, Renan, John Stuart Mill. But particularly of Ibsen." Moreover, Ibsen was also at the centre of attention in Germany through the 1880s.

> When, however, the 1890s generation of critics—often the same men as before—looked for specifically 'modern' qualities, to whom did they turn? To Strindberg and Nietzsche, Büchner and Kierkegaard, Bourget and Hamsun and Maeterlinck. But especially to Strindberg. This is a sharp change, and nowhere is it more dramatically revealed than in two successive articles by the Viennese critic, Hermann Bahr—one of 1890 [. . .] and the other of 1891 [. . .]. (pp. 42–43)

In the 1890 article, Bahr highlights the "synthesis of naturalism and romanticism, and urged the example of Ibsen as the supreme exponent", but less than a year later, "he speaks of 'the wild frenzy of the galloping development'" (p. 43), and all of a sudden, Strindberg is the central figure.

What occurs here seems somehow to be both *development* (albeit "galloping") and *rupture*; there is a "crossover point" when "something happens to the fortunes of realism and naturalism, themselves modern but not quite Modernist movements [. . .]" (p. 43). It is both striking and illuminating—given the complexity of the issues at hand—to notice how a crisis caused by a "Great Divide" here re-emerges as what may sound like a subtle difference between what is *modernist* on the one hand and *modern but not quite modernist* on the other. As if this were a crack or a crevice, but one that may turn into a canyon. In fact—as if anticipating how the plural "modernisms" came to be used later on, the authors could be said to make a conceptual slip as they go on to note that "looking at the two Germanic Modernisms, early (before 1890) and late (after 1890), one can see clearly in this context—something that the more confused events elsewhere perhaps disguise—the one growing out of the other." However, after that, it appears that they both keep growing, perhaps in contention as well as dialogue with one another, "not simply an extension but a *bifurcation* of the impulse to be modern" (p. 44). My discussion above should make it clear that I cannot but concur, and the analysis, earlier in this essay, of the selection of writers emphasized in *Modernism: 1890–1930*, should make it clear that one of the premises of the book is a pertinent difference between the concept of *modernism* and the word *modern* as used for instance in the more general concept of "modern literature".

8. . . . and an End to Modernism

The role of modern Scandinavian literature in the birth pangs of modernism, as outlined by Bradbury and McFarlane—especially of course the plays of Ibsen and Strindberg and Brandes' critical initiative—is interesting, a kind a "dislocation" in itself, considering the generally assumed centres of modern Western literature. However, the Nordic countries seem to step aside when we move closer to the temporal "epicentre of the change" (p. 32) and the "peak of intensity" of modernism in the early 1920s (p. 33). The material the authors draw on in that respect is mainly the Paris–London–New York axis and the German-language literary scene. They admit that while some critics would in fact see "the Modernist impulse" reaching "a point of exhaustion" already in the 1920s, others argue "that Modernism, far from being exhausted, has continued as our essential art right up to the present" (p. 34).

Bradbury and McFarlane, towards the end of the article, seek to defend their decision to draw the line at 1930: "After that is seems that certain elements of Modernism seem to be reallocated, as history increasingly came back in for intellectuals, as, with the loss of purpose and social cohesion, and the accelerating pace of technological change, modernity

was a visible scene open to simple report, and as the world depression tends increasingly to bring back political and economic determinism into the intellectual ideologies" (pp. 51–52). The two "seems" early on underline the hesitation in the sentence, even as it seeks to plough quickly through the 1930s and the pathway towards another world war. Earlier in the essay, looking back from their vantage point in the mid-1970s, the authors note of the post-World War II-period that it had "first appeared to be moving away from Modernism in the direction of realism and linearity" (a move frequently seen to occur already during the 1930s), but that there is now a "new entity" on the scene, "called Post-Modernism. The term is acquiring high currency now to talk about a compound of that art of chance and minimalization, that 'literature of silence', in which, as in Beckett and Borges, the idea of absurd creation, random method, parody or self-exhausting fictionality is paramount [. . .]" (p. 34).

Therefore, here we are in the mid-1970s, close to half a century after the surge of modernist energy had reportedly exhausted itself in the late twenties, still grappling with it in the form of "post-modernism". Bradbury and McFarlane cite Frank Kermode's article "Modernisms" from the late 1960s, in which he argues for a plurality of modernisms and their continuity up to present-day forms of "Neo-Modernism" but notes that "there has been only one Modernist Revolution" and "it happened a long time ago" (Kermode 1968, p. 24). Others had less faith in such continuities, and this was only the beginning of lively debates under the heading of postmodernism in the last few decades of the twentieth century, a multifarious stretch of an often cross-disciplinary inquiry into art but also culture in the broadest terms, frequently intertwining with a great deal of theoretical activity which has sometimes been summed up under the general term "theory", although salient parts of it have also been gone by another post-name: "poststructuralism". This was a time when the boundaries between scholarly and literary explorations would tend to open up; therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that "postmodernism" also came to be used in summing up tendencies in theoretical and critical work, at times even making the two *posts* seem all but synonymous. However, insofar as "postmodernism" was used for literary developments, these were often (but not always) seen as taking place *after* modernism, although the various "ends" of modernism kept cropping up (see Eysteinsson 1990, pp. 103–42, and Eysteinsson 2000).

This is not the place to map the complex critical post-activity from the late 1960s onwards, but it evinces various links to the legacy of literary modernism, which had radicalized textuality and helped bring about linguistic and cultural turns that went far beyond the connection with New Criticism which is so often brought up. The American historian Hayden White has emphasized how relevant "modern literary theory [is] to our understanding of the issues being debated among theorists of historical thought, research and writing", in part "because modern literary theory is in many respects fashioned out of the necessity of making sense of literary modernism, determining its historical specificity and significance as a cultural movement, and devising a critical practice adequate to its object of study" (White 1999, p. 26). Stephen Ross goes even further in his introduction to the volume *Modernism and Theory*:

> Modernism's critique of modernity animated theory's invention of postmodernity, while theory's anti-foundational stance extended modernism's indeterminacy, linguistic complexity, and reflexivity. The relationship between them is unique; though certain specific theories no doubt have particular relevance for other literary movements or eras (e.g., the New Historicism and the renaissance), theory *per se*—that massive influx of challenges to conventions of form, aesthetics, ideology, race, class, sex, gender, institutions, and subjectivity dating from the mid-1960s to the 1990s—is integrally bound to modernism. (Ross 2009, p. 2)

Perhaps this influx of challenges, aesthetic as well as theoretical, can in both cases be traced to the rupture Henri Lefebvre discusses in an important book from this theory-rich period, where he claims that "around 1910 a certain space was shattered. It was the space of common sense, of knowledge (*savoir*), of social practice, of political power, a space

thitherto enshrined in everyday discourse, just as in abstract thought, as the environment of and channel for communication; the space, too, of classical perspective and geometry, developed from the Renaissance onwards on the basis of the Greek tradition (Euclid, logic) and bodied forth in Western art and philosophy, as in the form of the city and town" (Lefebvre 1991, p. 25). Alternatively, is this yet another attempt to pinpoint a moment—relatively, dramatically, or playfully—this one being in consensus with Woolf's "in or about December, 1910", but one also thinks of Kermode's insistence on the single modernist "revolution" which happened "a long time ago", an attempt, that is to say, to pinpoint in time a change which in fact is protracted, although writers, artists, and theoreticians may all seek to express the sense and perception of that change in a compact form?

Furthermore, there is a similar urge to fix with some precision the moment of modernism's demise. When the study of literary modernism gained new momentum towards the end of the twentieth century, the discussion was still marked by the urge to find an end to modernism, that is to say modernism "proper", although this may usher in another post- or after- term. Along came "late modernism", which was perhaps meant to cope with certain uncomfortable inconsistencies or to account for an interim or transition period. Peter Nicholls' fine book *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* largely covers the same territory and time as Bradbury and McFarlane. Nicholls is willing to let modernism advance a little beyond the 1930 mark, but by 1936, we seemed to have moved beyond modernism; this is the year of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, which is found to be a "late modernist" work and of Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*, which stands "outside modernism" (Nicholls 1995, pp. 222, 254). My perspective is different from that of Nicholls, and I find *Nightwood* to be an important modernist novel, one that is significant for the history of modernism, in no small part due to its strength as a mid-1930s expression.

Tyrus Miller, in his book *Late Modernism* from 1999, begins to see the "funereal signs" of modernism already by about 1926, and for him Wyndham Lewis, Djuna Barnes, and Samuel Beckett serve as "exemplary late modernist figures". He does allow, however, for the corpus of "high modernism" to develop for a while alongside late modernism, in the case of modernists who were already under way, allowing Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (which others have claimed for postmodernism), Woolf's *The Waves*, and Pound's *Cantos* to retain modernist status (Miller 1999, pp. 5, 10).

However, there is too much leakage in this system. The categories are too narrow, the arguments too forced. With Pound's late *Cantos*, we are already well into the second half of the century. What about Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* in the fifties or even later works of his—how far does *late* modernism stretch? This is a crisis, and the boundaries do not hold (not to mention the centre). Modernism may have been contained in some sense, but instead, we have an open-ended late modernism that once let loose is hard to stop. In 2002, David Holloway's book on *The Late Modernism of Cormac McCarthy* appeared, and 2005 saw the publication of Varun Begley's *Harold Pinter and the Twilight of Modernism*, with a chapter called "A Last Modernist". The indefinite article may be significant, here; I wonder if we can find a last one yet. Furthermore, the twilight has been there all along.

9. Double Crisis

How can we begin to comprehend the historical shape of modernism, if we: (1) hesitate to see it as a literary force that becomes dominant in the early twentieth century, showing signs of exhaustion already in the late 1920s (even if certain signs of its revolution are said to appear as after-effects of one sort or another for a long time); and (2) recognize its longstanding dialogue and struggle with both a stronghold of realist literary paradigms, theoretical activity, and a broader social discourse and symbolic order which services modernity on many fronts? The elasticity of the shape of modernism is indeed precarious, for, to repeat words from Bradbury and McFarlane, cited in the above discussion, "Today it must surely seem to us that the truth lies somewhere between the view that Modernism is the supreme modern expression and the view that it is of marginal importance" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1976b, p. 28). Wherever the truth may lie, I would

argue that both these views are still vibrant and very much with us. A great deal of recent literary activity is grounded on mainstream traditions which seem not to have been seriously shaken by the formal and structural activities or experiments of modernism. In such "stubbornly non-modernistic" literary cultures, modernism may appear to be "of marginal importance".

From the other point of view, someone might argue—along the lines of my previous discussion—that even traditionally minded realist writing has often been more impacted by modernist ideas and activities than first impressions may indicate. A stronger argument for modernism as a force at centre stage may come from two other sources that have a great deal to do with the history of modernism: First, while modernism is generally not a popular aesthetic domain, it draws strength from its diverse expressions in different languages and places, and at different times—a strength that manifests itself in translation and other forms of cultural connections. Second, the critical reception of modernism, especially from the mid-twentieth century on, has sometimes pushed modernist writing to the forefront of literary education in several countries, which in turn has strengthened its position in the broader literary "establishment". Variants of this reception can of course be traced to early responses to modernist writing, but it is only in the second half of the twentieth century that they take on the solidity of critical paradigms—which then also played a significant role in the fervent theoretical activity starting in the late 1960s.

The historical positions of modernism do not, therefore, depend solely on its "newness", although the characteristics of radical modern art have sometimes been explained by its "shock" effect on the audience (as in the TV series *The Shock of the New* and synonymous book on modern art by Robert Hughes in 1980). Furthermore, the novelty and experimentation in creative writing and the other arts can only in a limited sense be compared to innovation in science and technology, although art may enter into an intense dialogue with these realms, which have shaped modernity in irrevocable ways. What I have called the narrative crisis of modernism has much to do with the relations between language, narrative, and the reality of modernity—the process of modernization which has provided certain sectors of humanity with prosperity but also enhanced violence, exploitation, and human-caused disasters that transgress the enlightenment, rationalism, and humanism that many have been seen as core elements of progress.

Fredric Jameson finds that modernism in literature is a result or product of a double crisis: a "social crisis of narratable experiences" and a "semiotic crisis of narrative paradigms" (Jameson 1984, p. 211). The two inevitably mesh and are shaped by circumstances that can make it hard to convey historical experiences in traditional narratives. Hayden White argues that although literary modernism appears to show hostility to narrative discourse, it does

> not so much reject narrativity, historicity or even realism as explore the limits of their peculiarly nineteenth-century forms and expose the mutual complicity of these forms in the dominant discursive practices of high bourgeois culture. In the process, literary modernism revealed new or forgotten peculiarities of narrative discourse itself, potentialities for rendering intelligible the specifically modern experiences of time, historical consciousness, and social reality. (White 1999, p. 26)

In fact, White goes so far as to say that instead of viewing modernism as "a rejection of the realist project and a denial of history", it can be seen as

> an anticipation of a new form of historical reality, a reality that included among its supposedly unimaginable, unthinkable, and unspeakable aspects: the phenomena of Hitlerism, the Final Solution, total war, nuclear contamination, mass starvation, and ecological suicide; a profound sense of the incapacity of our sciences to explain, let alone control or contain these; and a growing awareness of the incapacity of our traditional modes of representation even to describe them adequately." (White 1999, p. 41)

It is often said that language does not fathom major traumas that individuals experience, and White here points to such traumas on a large, historical scale. This may remind us of a significant moment in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) where language is found to be vacuous, exhausted by the war, especially words describing heroic behaviour: "I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious and sacrifice and the expression in vain. [. . .] There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity" (Hemingway [1929] 1957, pp. 161–62). The mid-section of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, describing the interplay of weather, time, and an empty house waiting for its inhabitants, may bring home a more powerful sense of the first World War than any mimetic rendering of the war itself. Then along comes the Second World War with disasters on a more massive scale. Later still, in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, the unspeakable has all but submerged the world and its narrative leverage.

Hayden White's analysis of literary modernism as an endeavour to capture the experience of various extreme predicaments of modernity may certainly account for important aspects of the crises and challenges of modernist narratives. The expressive "trials" of modernism no doubt often spring from attempts to capture experiences felt to exceed the mimetic or descriptive conventions of realist discourse, not only in moments of disaster but also in the details of everyday life as they take on their internalized shapes. Can we read White as saying that literary modernism has shouldered its historical destiny and pushed "classical" realism out of its central role? In an interesting article, the Slovene scholar Jola Škulj refers to White's arguments, discussed above, and concurs, saying: "With modernism, the traditional mode of narrative in literature and in historiography has become inadequate" (Škulj 2006, p. 194). Taken at face value, this comment would seem to indicate that literary modernism is more authentic in grappling with modernity than traditional narrative texts, which might further lead to the assumption that the ruptured and fragmented narrative of modernism does in fact create distinct aesthetic spaces and mobilities.

This in turn brings us back to the alleged "privileged" position of modernism that has come under substantial criticism in recent years. This situation is perhaps best described by words to be found at the end of Guðbergur Bergsson's novel *Anna* (1969): "If the story-line is given a punch, the system goes haywire and turns into multifarious fiction which gets stuck in the chicken brain of the reader" (Bergsson 1969, p. 249, my translation).[12] Like so many raucous statements in Bergsson's works, this one is not as unambiguous as it may seem. Some might take this as a somewhat arrogant statement by a modernist writer, to the effect that disruptive and multifarious fiction—"high" modernism indeed—is only for those who do not have a "chicken brain". From another angle, "the reader" could be anyone, with the implication that we all receive our punches at one time or another and have to cope with storylines being interrupted or severed. As for the history of modernism—perhaps that is a narrative which will remain in constant crisis, as paradoxical as that may sound.

10. Modernist Rhizomes and Formations

It should be obvious from my discussion so far that I am sceptical of ideas of total paradigm shifts in literary history, just as I am sceptical of periodisation in the name of a single concept. We may feel that we need specific concepts to pinpoint and outline various features of the literary landscape in the second half of the twentieth century, but it seems constrictive to do so without accounting for both realism and modernism as salient forces of literary culture and aesthetics, advancing through the Second World War and the Cold War, up to and into a new century.

Moreover, as noted earlier, modernism is in significant ways shaped by its reception and construction in the post-WWII period—I would hazard to say that it is only then that it assumes, in certain areas, the kind of "dominance" some claim it had in the early decades of the century. Moreover, if Bradbury and McFarlane are correct in say-

[12] "Sé söguþræðinum gefið á hann, ruglast kerfið og snýst í margbrotinn skáldskap, sem stendur fastur í hænuhaus lesandans."

ing that modernism is an art "that responds to the scenario of our chaos", driven by "a notion of a relationship of crisis between art and history", and in no small part by a recognition of the First World War "as the apocalyptic moment of transition into the new" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1976b, pp. 27, 29, 51), then one cannot but wonder about the significance of the Second World War for both the reception of earlier modernism and the activity of writers who pursued work in this vein after another apocalypse had struck. This second moment of transition into "the new" brought us the Holocaust (after a rapid breakdown of democracy in Germany), the devastation of cities through fire bombing, and finally the use of the atom bomb (which opened up a whole new dimension of what "total war" could mean). The role of the Second World War for modernism and its history has been underestimated.

This takes us back to Auerbach who in writing about modernism of the 1920s can also be seen as responding to the scene of chaos which he watched from his exile—such displacement being in itself a chaotic and estranging experience. The same is true of Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, and there is little doubt that the insightful analyses of modernism we find in the writings of Adorno are also shaped by exile and WWII, and the course of events leading up to it. In its aftermath, modernism takes on a renewed urgency, even if combined with new ironic edges, whether we find these in the persistence of avant-garde experiments or in a playful or sardonic self-awareness of narrative reoccurrences. The modernist scene in the post-WWII period was to some extent a complex meeting place of "old" and new modernisms. For instance, while several works of Kafka had been translated into a number of languages by the late 1930s, his presence as a key European writer only began to be seriously felt in the post-WW II era, when the impact of his oeuvre is contemporaneous with the writings of authors such as Camus, Borges, Celan, Grass, Sarraute, Nabokov, and Lispector—and the charged but slippery affinity between Kafka and Beckett is important for the long view of modernism.

During this period, it also becomes doubly obvious how frequently the aesthetic ventures of modernism tend to involve the predicaments of displacement as well as the meeting or clashing of different worlds—whether in terms of culture or subjectivity. This is true of Kafka, Joyce, Stein, and Pound, and also of Celan, Nabokov, Nelly Sachs, Salman Rushdie, and Herta Müller—to move right up to the present. There is an internal restlessness in many modernist works, although it can also morph into a kind of stasis which can be hard to pinpoint in place and time, although sometimes it seems akin to exile (see Olsson 2007).

However, such speculations about modernism before and after the world-altering events of WWII also make one conscious, as pointed out above, of the ways in which modernist works and ideas about modernism have themselves travelled between languages and cultures. Documented literary history has always been full of missing pieces or blind spots, even large, eclipsed territories, vis-à-vis the historical scene of literary culture and productivity. Nowhere more so than in the realm of cross-cultural relations, as they materialise in translated literature and in original writings about foreign culture—which are also acts of translation, in a looser or broader sense of the word (see Caneda-Cabrera 2007). Insofar as modernist writing constitutes a challenge to prevalent traditions—and even broadly to *culture as tradition*—its international dissemination in the form of translation and critical dialogue constitutes a terrain full of interesting stories and points of contact, resistance, and renegotiation of the new, the foreign, and the native.

What happened, for instance, to modernism in the Nordic world after Strindberg had made his international breakthrough in or around 1890 and moved into the new century with even more radical experiments, notably with *Ett drömspel* (A Dream Play) which was published in 1902 and first performed in Stockholm in 1907? Was modernism subsequently lulled back to sleep in the North? About a hundred years later, or from about 1999 to 2014, I was involved with a research group from six Nordic countries, focusing—at conferences and in various publications—on the routes, reception, and local manifestations of modernism from Finland to Iceland, including Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and the

Faroe Islands (see for instance Tysdahl et al. 2002; Jansson et al. 2004; Jansson et al. 2008; and Lothe et al. 2014). There is little doubt that modernism took root early on in these countries, in some form or another. For quite some time there were very few contiguous formations of this kind, but rhizomatic activity was confirmed in a number of individual endeavours, such as the Danish poet Johannes V. Jensen's book *Digte* (Poems) in 1906, while a number of years elapsed before a major modernist breakthrough in the Danish novel materialized in Tom Kristensen's *Hærverk* (Havoc) in 1930. Around the same time, in the early 1930s, the Finnish writer Volter Kilpi brings out structurally innovative novels, akin to those of Joyce and Proust. By that time the Icelandic writers Halldór Laxness, with the novel *Vefarinn mikli frá Kasmír* (The Great Weaver of Kashmir 1927), and Þórbergur Þórðarson, with his multi-genre prose work *Bréf til Láru* (Letter to Laura 1924), had also challenged the development of the realist novel. In the Norwegian novel, there is also a time lag between the modernist stirrings in Hamsun's *Hunger* of 1890 and the contributions of novelists Cora Sandel, Aksel Sandemose, and Sigurd Hoel in the second quarter of the 20th Century. Hoel was an early admirer of Kafka and instrumental in getting *Der Prozess* (The Trial) translated into Norwegian in 1933, the first translation of the novel to come out in any language. Hoel was himself a translator of Conrad and Faulkner. Thus, a modernist web begins to emerge through the intertwining of original writing, translation, and critical reception, and after another time lag due to WWII and the German occupation of Norway, a new modernist wave is brought into motion, notably in Tarjei Vesaas' novels of the 1950s and 1960s (see Lothe and Tysdahl 2007, p. 865).

There is, however, one significant Nordic modernist "formation" in the early decades of the twentieth century, one that is in itself cross-cultural, since the group in question belonged to the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland: Edith Södergran, Elmer Diktonius, Gunnar Björling, and Rabbe Enckell "formed a modernist front from 1916, the year of Södergran's debut, until around 1930, when the group gradually disintegrated" (Jansson 2007, p. 838). By that time other modernist poets were emerging on the scene, most visibly in Sweden, where throughout the 1930s, a modernist network of modernism was gradually assembled, especially in the domain of poetry. There, and in fact throughout the Nordic domain, the impact of Södergran and her colleagues is quite perceptible—in Iceland as late as around 1950, when modernist poetry finally made a breakthrough there. However, this impact was everywhere intermingled with other impulses, coming for instance, via translation and critical debates, from T.S. Eliot and the French surrealists. Eliot's poetry, especially *The Waste Land*, had a significant impact on Nordic poetry, but it did so in multifarious company with other modernist works, both local and foreign. In the realm of fiction, the significance of translation and of the critical discussion of foreign literature is striking, in the midst of a local scene that is going through a transition, fast or slow. The Swedish writer Karl Vennberg, an important poet in his own right, writes critical essays about Kafka and translates Kafka's *Der Prozess* in 1945. In 1946, Thomas Warburton's Swedish translation of Joyce's *Ulysses* is published in Stockholm and Helsinki. Thus, in the post-WWII era, Kafka and Joyce assume roles that are both new and iterative.

By that time, the Swedish "literary institution" is on its way to becoming "decidedly pro-modernist"—one can only wonder if that could be said of any broad-based literary institution in any other language community before 1950. Which means of course that neo-avant-groups would soon start questioning the status of "high modernism" (Jansson 2007, pp. 842–45). This is one of the ways in which modernism regenerates itself, as it has done ever since in the Nordic countries, in fertile co-existence and struggle with other currents. It is shaped not by or during a single continuous period, but by various and not always easily visible laws of timeliness, anachronism, and displacement. Furthermore, it can take a long time coming. When I started translating the works of Kafka into Icelandic in the early 1980s, along with my father (yes, a somewhat ironic arrangement in the case of Kafka), only the novella "Die Verwandlung" ("The Metamorphosis") and a few other short stories had appeared in Icelandic, even though modernism had made its initial breakthrough in Icelandic prose literature some time ago. We were driven by our interest in Kafka but

also by our awareness of the lasting impact of modernism, its ways of reinventing itself, through both original writing and translation. Therefore, we found it relevant to bring the works of Kafka, that master of warped selves and fragmented texts (or was it the other way round?), into the Icelandic language. We gradually translated most of Kafka's narrative corpus, with the longest novel, *Das Schloß*, not appearing in Icelandic until 2015. *The Castle* in 2015—that must be "late modernism", if ever there was one. However, K., the lonesome traveller, is still as perplexed and arrogant as ever, as he stands on the wooden bridge leading to the village and looks up into the void that appears to be there.

Much remains to be learned from translation and other cultural contacts in the realm of modernist research, and this is a branch of scholarship that seems bound to grow and prosper, considering that in the past two decades, modernist studies have sought to expand their international horizon. Since I can only touch very briefly on this development, I shall restrict my attention to a few projects that can be said to have followed in Bradbury and McFarlane's footsteps in bringing together a team of scholars exploring literary modernism as a cross-cultural and multilingual phenomenon. These new endeavours have also sought to move out the borders of modernism, both geographically and chronologically, as well as conceptually.

Some years ago, I co-edited, with Vivian Liska, a two-volume symposium on modernism brought out by the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) as part of its series *Comparative History of Literature in European Languages*. It involved close to 70 contributors in various countries working on a project that revolved around a single concept—a daunting and fascinating task, especially since this concept does not have a narrowly defined realm of meaning even though it serves a key role in designating major currents of ideas and aesthetic practice (Eysteinsson and Liska 2007). The concept could be said to constitute a forum capable of embracing considerable critical and theoretical disagreements, but it also needs some framework to insure stability and functionality—its sheer usefulness.

While such a large collaborative project is in progress, one has a strong sense of both the constraints and the mobility of the borders of modernism. The ICLA *Modernism* symposium takes a long historical view of modernism and addresses its topics through a broad range of theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches. It is based in part on the premise that modernism is a salient current in modern literature, one in which the avant-garde plays a significant part, but it is not presented as an overarching or dominant paradigm of twentieth-century literature. Its geographical reach is different here and more diverse than in Bradbury and McFarlane's book, and wider in that it includes for instance case studies on Latin America and Australia, as well as for instance Western literary connections with Africa and Japan. However, it does not have the global or planetary aspirations which were on the rise at the time in modernist studies, concomitantly with an equally interesting resurgence of *world literature* as a sphere of scholarship.

The global turn in modernist studies has been signalled by a number of important publications, including the volume *Geomodernisms* (Doyle and Winkiel 2005), and two large Oxford University Press volumes, *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* (2010) and *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (2012). In these symposia, the literary world can certainly be said to emerge as a modernist stage, and this has opened up the question of modernism for a whole new inquiry. What happens to modernism as concept and designation when it is used as a key term in such planetary mapping enterprises? Ideally, it will enter a forum for various comparative explorations in world literature, but hardly in order for us to find semblances of it elsewhere. Although modernism became a significant and challenging force in Western urban centres, usually emerging a little later in more "outlying" territories—sometimes with a time lag which might entail enrichment rather than belatedness—it is obvious that it cannot, as such, serve as any kind of measuring stick on a world-wide scale. On the other hand, this does not mean we can, in broad, global contexts, ignore modernism as a historical and aesthetic concept and the roles it has played where it has proven to be relevant.

Moreover, it is one thing to be critical of modernist aesthetics and another to make it a scapegoat for Western blindness, due to "privileges" it may enjoy. Morag Shiach has stated that scholarly discourse about modernism has "tended to iron out the complexity of competing styles at any given historical moment in favour of a map which identifies particular form of artistic experimentation as more truly expressive of their moment" (Shiach 2004, p. 135; cited in Brooker et al. 2010, p. 5).

If this is so—and I agree that this is sometimes the case—then it seems to me that the strongest response to such simplification is a critical reassessment of the complexity and validity of these competing styles, which may not have been acknowledged on their own terms. Such a move would potentially augment the critical discussion about the varieties of modern literary currents, forms, and methods, and the ways in which they interact. Some may have felt that this was impossible, given the strong status of modernism within parts of the literary culture, especially within the universities. For a while postmodernism appeared to have undermined this "regime". However, modernism made a comeback—fired up by new approaches and the "new modernisms"—and may by now have swallowed up much of the difference that had been claimed on behalf of after-modernisms (both "post" and "late"). Nevertheless, one should not, in seeking to understand its renewal, ignore historical factors, some of which I have sought to touch on in this essay. How then, one may ask, do we distinguish between the history that we seek to grapple with through sign systems like literature, and the history of these sign systems, including the history of certain perceptible currents, and the history of the concepts identifying these currents? In a 1992 essay, surveying the state of affairs in modernist studies, Marjorie Perloff noted memorably that modernism "after all, now has the charm of history on its side, even as it remains, at the end of the twentieth century, our Primal Scene" (Perloff 1992, p. 175).

Which history is Perloff talking about? Does the primal scene involve the potentially traumatic meeting of history and art, during which history brings along not only its charm but also its brutal force? However, the charm of history could also refer to the formal endeavours modernism has pursued in coping with experiences that are not easily put into words. Can aesthetic form meet the force of historical moments? Alternatively, can the disrupted or "troubled" referentiality of modernist works be critically (and justifiably) whittled down to "form" in a narrow and negative sense of "formalism"?

Concomitantly, one cannot bypass the history of the concept of modernism and of what we call "modernist studies". I do not think anyone who has worked intensely in modernist studies in recent decades can deny that significant *value*—in more than one sense of that word—has been amassed in the name of modernism. As a term for aesthetic activities that have both highlighted and frustrated our notions of modernity, modernism has been a significant academic preoccupation for quite some time, and it is probably safe to say that it has acquired a fair amount of cultural capital. It is a concept in which literary, critical, and academic establishments have invested heavily, as have a great many researchers, teachers, and authors of academic and other critical writings. This value comes from a claim, in the name of modernism, to a radical cultural grasp on the modern world, based in aesthetic responses to the scene of modernity—and here, again, we may perhaps spot the "primal scene". However, if critics claim that modernism "responds to the scenario of our chaos" or that it works—significantly also in its formal inventiveness—through moments of crisis in both history and subjective realms, then all such evaluation contributes to this "value". This also explains, in part, the privileges modernism is found to enjoy and the "authenticity" sometimes ascribed to it. The strong position of modernism, as a literary "institution", also and in no small part, stems from individual writers who have come to be seen as the prominent figures of this current; the creators of literary works on which modernism thrives as an enterprise and a concept. Many of these names are well known and come immediately to mind. Here, as elsewhere, for better or worse, the canon holds sway, although it is not immutable.

One way to respond to the power of such an institution, instead of labouring to reassess the "competing styles", as I suggested earlier—especially perhaps the sleeping giant of

realism as a concept—is to step inside this privileged sphere and push out its borders, making the critical and aesthetic space linked to modernism more and more inclusive, and thus gradually change the game. At the risk of grossly simplifying a complicated process, I would suggest that this is an important and interesting factor in some recent modernist studies. The editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, Mark Wollaeger, discusses in his concise introduction the difference between the terms "modern" and "modernist", noting candidly that in the recent approaches of several scholars this difference is fading, and he refers to Neil Lazarus's view that modernism is not tied to any specifications of form and that "any cultural production that attempts to grapple with the realities of modernization might qualify as modernist" (Wollaeger 2012, pp. 11, 14).

If, in the process of modernism's global conquest, the difference between *modernism* and *modern*—the crevice we saw turn into a canyon in Bradbury and McFarlane's essay discussed above—has not only turned to crevice again but has in fact disappeared, we do indeed have a crisis in the narratives that constitute the history of modernism. Perhaps it simply flatlines, as the air is let out of not only "form" but also "difference", that darling term of much modern scholarship. We would then presumably use "modernist" and "modernisms" for any kind of modern literary (or aesthetic) expression. Arnold Bennett, John Steinbeck, and Jonathan Franzen would be as modernist as Virginia Woolf, Samuel Beckett, and Toni Morrison. We might as well then just use the word "modern—unless all these writers, along with many others, are modernists because they all "grapple with the realities of modernization", whereas there may be others who do not. That potential distinction might seem to open up a strangely familiar Pandora's box, but we probably have enough to cope with as is—since while the borders of modernism may be both moving out and fading as we speak, various aspects of the modernist crisis that Auerbach called our attention to still seem to be in full force—primal scene or not. Before we ultimately conflate "modern" and "modernist", there are still issues to contemplate and discuss. Given world enough and time.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Nordic Modernism for Beginners

Susan C. Brantly

Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706, USA; sbrantly@wisc.edu

Received: 16 July 2018; Accepted: 18 September 2018; Published: 20 September 2018

Abstract: This essay proposes a narrative of the Nordic countries' relationship to modernism and other major literary trends of the late 19th and 20th centuries, that situates them in conjunction with the rest of Europe. "Masterpieces of Scandinavian Literature: the 20th Century" is a course that has been taught to American college students without expertise in literature or Scandinavia for three decades. This article describes the content and methodologies of the course and how Nordic modernisms are explained to this particular audience of beginners. Simple definitions of modernism and other related literary movements are provided. By focusing on this unified literary historical narrative and highlighting the pioneers of Scandinavian literature, the Nordic countries are presented as solid participants in European literary and cultural history. Further, the social realism of the Modern Breakthrough emerges as one of the Nordic countries distinct contributions to world literature.

Keywords: modernisms; Nordic; European; literature; translation; decadence

1. Introduction

Are the Nordic countries latecomers to the international phenomenon of modernism or were they on the cutting edge as it was getting underway? Were the Nordic countries in step with each other and Europe in terms of their relationship to modernism or do they each have a separate history? The answer to each of these questions is, paradoxically, "Yes." This essay seeks to offer a narrative of the literary trends in Scandinavia of the late 19th and 20th centuries that reconciles these seemingly irreconcilable positions. Such a narrative is somewhat at odds with some of the prevailing scholarly narratives and arose in the context of explaining Nordic modernism to beginners. The purpose is to provide a fresh perspective on these narratives and contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation about the concepts of the Modern Breakthrough, modernism, decadence, and postmodernism.

In the spring of 1988, the course, "Masterpieces of Scandinavian Literature: the 20th Century," was taught by the present author for the first time. The course has been offered virtually every spring since then, and I have spent much time and thought devising ways of explaining the major intellectual and artistic movements of the 20th century to students who have no background in literary studies or Scandinavia.[1] At the University of Wisconsin, the course counts as part of the breadth requirement for a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science degree in Letters and Science. That means that many budding natural scientists and social scientists have taken the class to see what the humanities might have to offer them. Most, but not all, will have taken some English literature courses during high school, so it is helpful to place the intellectual trends of Scandinavia into a larger European/American

[1] The most relevant of my publications along these lines include: "Heidenstam's *Karolinerna* and the *Fin de Siècle*." *Fin(s) de Siècle in Scandinavian Perspective. Festskrift in Honor of Harald S. Naess* (Brantly 1993), "Into the Twentieth Century: 1890–1950" in *A History of Swedish Literature* (Brantly 1996), *Sex and the Modern Breakthrough* (Brantly 2004) and *The Historical Novel, Transnationalism, and the Postmodern Era: Presenting the Past* (Brantly 2017).

context, so that students might have a chance of relating these concepts to works they might already have read or could perhaps read in the future. In this essay, the distilled wisdom of thirty years is presented with the acknowledgment that the bullet lists and definitions may seem reductive to experts and may present points of contention . . . but it is a place to start the arguments.

2. Modern Breakthrough versus Modernism

Given that the focus is on Scandinavia, the course begins with a brief look at the Modern Breakthrough, since it is such a significant moment in Nordic literary history, a time when Nordic letters exerted influence throughout Europe, and it is a literary movement that casts a long and important shadow throughout the 20th century.[2] When one speaks of literary movements or periods, it is important to note "where," "when," and "what" is meant. In the case of the Modern Breakthrough, the "where" is specifically Nordic. In other traditions, similar movements might be referred to as 19th century realism or naturalism. The "when" is given in rounded figures: 1870–1890. These round dates are intended to signify that these sorts of periods, concepts, movements have been identified and named by scholars, based on observations of common trends. Writers did not simply wake up on New Years' Day in 1870 and decide all at once to call themselves writers of the Modern Breakthrough. Elements of these movements exist before and after these rounded dates, but they indicate a moment of dominance, when the movement reaches its peak. The "what" of these literary concepts consists of both world view and certain literary and artistic techniques that tend to gravitate towards the central world view. The bullet list that describes the Modern Breakthrough is as follows:

- A belief in God is replaced by a belief in science and reason.
- The world is explainable and logical.
- Realism—Literature tries to give a true picture of life.
- An interest in social issues (class struggle, feminism).
- A belief in objectivity—It is possible to depict reality as it is.
- Social problems can be solved in public debate.

In this context, "a belief in God" represents an understanding of how the world is organized: a higher being has thought it all out and everything must make sense somehow. In the Modern Breakthrough, the higher being is replaced by the scientist, inspired by Darwin, who can explain the causes and effects of existence. There is an initial optimism that, if only we know enough, we can explain everything, and even human behavior and world history can become predictable. There is a strong sense that much human behavior is biologically determined, so details of nature, nurture, and environmental issues are important. The natural mode of expression is realism, since writers hope to create true and convincing depictions of life, generating human documents or case studies that will help us to understand human behavior and the world. Two primary focuses of interest are class issues and the woman question, due to historical changes taking place in the latter part of the 19th century. There is an almost naïve belief in objectivity, due to a great stake in having literary texts perceived as true and convincing. In the final point of the bullet list, scholars of Scandinavia will recognize the echo of Georg Brandes' winged words in his lectures that gave the Modern Breakthrough its name (Brandes 1883). It is noteworthy that the writers of the Modern Breakthrough did not seem to

[2] It is perhaps important to note that many discussions of Nordic modernism have an uneasy relationship with the Modern Breakthrough, in part because some of the authors, notably Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, have proven very useful to demonstrating that the Nordic countries were on the cutting edge of modernism. Although the Modern Breakthrough is a reaction to modernity, it is not a subset of modernism, in my view. They are in some ways opposites. Poignant, socially engaged realistic literature is one of Scandinavia's greatest contributions to world literature, but this is often eclipsed by the modernist innovations offered by Ibsen and Strindberg. They are simultaneously both men of the Modern Breakthrough and modernist innovators. This view is slightly at odds with, for example, Pil Dahlerup's statement: "*Modernisme* er en blandt flere kunstneriske udformninger af den 'modernitet', som 'det moderne gennembrud' skabte (Dahlerup 1991, p. 31; 'Modernism is one among many artistic forms of the 'modernity,' that 'the modern breakthrough' created')."

perceive the paradox between being objective and canvassing social issues, which involves a great deal of partisanship.

Starting the course with a basic understanding of the Nordic Modern Breakthrough becomes relevant later in the course as we deal with working-class literature of the 1930s, and feminist literature of the 1970s. Much still applies, although biological determinism is no longer in fashion: What is the point of changing society if one's lot in life is already biologically predetermined? The working class is not inherently inferior in terms of intelligence and general viability; it is social conditions that need to be changed in order to improve working-class lives. Some feminist writers of the 1970s have much in common with the Modern Breakthrough as well, although they have also given up the cult of objectivity. It is perfectly acceptable to describe female experience from a woman's point of view.

The literary text used to illustrate the principles of the Modern Breakthrough is August Strindberg's "Otur" ("Bad Luck") from his short story collection *Giftas* (Strindberg 1913; Married). This is a text that I have translated to English myself, which brings up the complication of which texts students read in the class. To a great extent, that depends on which texts are available in translation, although personal preferences of the instructor also play a role.[3] One significant drawback with working with translations is that poetry is underrepresented, which is especially unfortunate in regard to modernism.

At the outset, the Modern Breakthrough bullet list forms a contrast to the modernism bullet list. The two modes are played off each other, in order to clarify the differences. The "where" of modernism is given as Europe and America and the "when" is 1910–1930 (remember we are talking about a peak.) The general dates of modernism are much more scattered if one considers the individual Nordic countries. Back in the early 1990s, Nordic literary histories argued for a much later heyday of modernism for the individual Nordic countries (Sweden 1940s; Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Finland 1950s and 1960s).[4] There are signs that this narrative is under revision, but this phenomenon illustrates the benefits of considering Nordic modernism against a backdrop of European modernism. There are strong individual representatives of Nordic modernism (Hamsun, Strindberg, and Lagerkvist, to name a few), even if they cannot be said to represent a dominant trend in their specific Nordic country at that particular moment. These individual writers are way ahead of the curve, in terms of Nordic modernism, but closer in step to Anglo-American modernism. These exceptional individuals allow the Nordic countries to be integrated into the general narrative of European modernism.

The six points of the modernist bullet list are meant to resonate with the six points of the Modern Breakthrough list, and they are as follows:

- A belief in God is replaced by a feeling of isolation and anguish.
- The world is fragmented. The artist must provide coherence.

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[3] The reading for the course has, of course, changed over the years. Books that have fallen off the schedule because they went out of print include: Martin Andersen Nexø's *Pelle Eroberen* (Nexø 1989; *Pelle the Conqueror*, vol. 1.), Peter Seeberg's *Fugls føde* (Seeberg 1990; *The Imposter*), Knut Faldbakken's *Adams dagbok* (Faldbakken 1988; *Adam's Diary*), and Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's *Den vedervärdige mannen från Säffle* (Sjöwall and Wahlöö 1980; *The Abominable Man*).

[4] These dates are somewhat standard, though possibly in the process of being re-evaluated. These suggested peaks appear in a number of sources, but you can find references to these varying Nordic modernism heydays in the proceedings of the 1990 IASS meeting: *Modernism i skandinavisk litteratur som historisk fenomen og teoretisk problem* (Lien 1991; Modernism in Scandinavian Literature as a Historical Phenomenon and Theoretical Problem), edited by Asmund Lien. The story has not changed much by 2007 and *Modernism: A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*, edited by Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska. These sources are also united in that they agree that strong early modernists existed before these peak periods. Toril Moi's *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism* (Moi 2006) and Dean Krouk's *Fascism and Modernist Literature in Norway* (Krouk 2017) are two examples of books that move modernism's timeline in Norway up quite a bit, and a symptom of the revision that may be underway. An important book that puts Nordic modernism into a European context is *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890–1930* (Bradbury and McFarlane 1976) by Malcom Bradbury and James McFarlane. The "Chronology of Events" at the end is particularly interesting, and James McFarlane's choices of Nordic texts are as affected by personal bias as my own. Two volumes that also address issues of the relationship between Nordic and European modernisms include *English and Nordic Modernisms* (Tysdahl et al. 2002) and *European and Nordic Modernisms* (Jansson et al. 2004).

- Irreality—Literature creates poetic, subjective realities which do not conform to the rules of this world.
- An interest in artistic issues. (The limits of literary genres are tested. Aspects of form in literature are of major interest.)
- A belief in subjectivity. (The only mind you can know is your own. The only reality you can know is your own subjective reality.)
- A suspicion of language—Is it possible to communicate fully with others?

Arguably, the first point could read: A belief in science is replaced by isolation and anguish. Nonetheless, the struggle with the absence of a God remains relevant. "Anguish" seems to be the best the English language can offer to express "Angst" or "ångest". The world is seen as fragmented, and the hope of overarching explanations, reasons, and patterns is futile. If any coherence is to be found, it will be imposed by the artistic process. Realism no longer reflects the individual's relationship to reality. The term "irreality" is not (or was not) an English word, but is borrowed from German's "Irrealismus." The point is to distinguish this from "unreality" (which seems too judgmental) and "surrealism" which is a rather specific form of irreality. The reality depicted in modernist works is highly subjective and symbolic, and does not always obey the laws of physics. Rather than focusing on society's ills, modernism prioritizes artistic issues. Especially in the aftermath of World War I, it was felt that new forms were needed to give expression to a new, chaotic perception of reality, therefore, literary innovation and experimentation were highly valued. Subjectivity is the dominant mode of perception, and objectivity is scarcely a possibility. There is no place outside the world itself from which the world can be described dispassionately. Whereas language was thought to be a tool for social change during the Modern Breakthrough, there is a strong suspicion of language's ability to connect people or even to express what it means to say.

The text used to illustrate modernism in the initial lecture is Pär Lagerkvist's "Kärleken och döden" ("Love and Death") from *Onda Sagor* (Lagerkvist 1965; Evil Tales). From a certain perspective, Strindberg's "Bad Luck" has the same plot as "Love and Death": Boy likes girl. Girl is mean to boy. Boy is sad. The differing ways in which this simple story is presented help to illustrate the differences between the two literary modes. Strindberg's tale depicts the plight of a wholesaler from Skeppsbron, Master Ernst, at a particular place and time (1880s Stockholm), and his unlucky marriage to a young woman with whom he was not particularly well acquainted, and who turns out to have vastly different tastes, habits, and values from her husband. There are many realistic details regarding location, dress, and customs. She likes French novels, which Ernst cannot stand, and the wife despises Dickens, who is the husband's favorite. The list goes on and on. There are references to Darwinian natural selection as the force that causes men and women to become attracted to one another. Ultimately, Master Ernst remains a slave to his sexual attraction to his wife and cannot divorce her despite her compromising behavior, and there is every indication that his life will continue to be fairly miserable. It is simply "bad luck" that he happened to have met and been attracted to this particular woman. If social norms were to change so that bourgeois men and women could get to know each other before marriage, then this sort of thing might not happen. The narrative is third-person, and our authoritative narrator, who knows much more than the characters he describes, enlists his reader as a co-conspirator with the occasional rhetorical question: "What use was it?"

Lagerkvist's "Love and Death" tends to strike students immediately with its brevity: It is a scant paragraph long. Is it a short story? A prose poem? At a glance, one can see how genre expectations are already being unsettled and challenged. The location is nowhere recognizable, and appears timeless. There are no specific details that reveal when and where this is taking place. Our first-person narrator is walking beside his beloved when he is shot by a hairy cupid wielding a crossbow who has stepped out of a dark, cheerless fortress. He falls down and she continues on her way. The narrator reflects that she must not have noticed that he had been shot, otherwise she would have stopped. His blood runs after her in the gutter until there is no more. This is a shocking fragment of experience. The reader does not even know who these people are or how they came to be here. The rules of biology have

been suspended, because our narrator ought to be dead since he has no blood left. Burly cupids with crossbows are not something you see every day. This is irreality, a symbolic subjective reality. Language, in this case, does not form a bridge between individuals. They do not communicate, and our narrator is confined to his own subjective experience of his beloved's deeds. The overwhelming note struck is one of isolation and anguish.

3. Decadence and the Transition to Modernism

As presented, the Modern Breakthrough and modernism seem to be opposites. How does one get from Point A to Point B? The attentive student will note that there are twenty years missing between them (1890–1910), which is designated as the *Fin de Siècle*, or what one might also call literary decadence, which peaked around the turn-of-the-century throughout Europe.[5] The bullet list that describes this era is as follows:

- There is a growing pessimism about science.
- The irrational is of interest.
- Realism is used as well as dream-like symbolism.
- An interest in existential issues.
- A belief in subjectivity. (The only mind you can know is your own. The only reality you can know is your own subjective reality.)
- A suspicion of language—Is it possible to communicate fully with others?

Society's great faith in science being able to solve all the problems of the world begins to wane as many problems remain unsolved. The idea of biological determinism seems to negate the existence of human will: What is the point of trying to be different if everything is programmed into your genes and you are shaped by forces outside your control? As a sort of reaction against the logic and reason of the Modern Breakthrough, an interest in the irrational arises (think Sigmund Freud). Realism is still in wide use, but dream sequences allow for experimentation with symbol and irreality. Rather than social or artistic issues, the focus turns to existential issues. How is the individual supposed to navigate the choices of existence, especially since doubt has been cast on the power of the human will? Subjectivity, rather than objectivity, comes to the fore. There is an inward turn in literature that focuses on individuals rather than society at large. Language, which had not seemed to change society for the better, is viewed with suspicion.

The text that illustrates this transition between the Modern Breakthrough and modernism is Hjalmar Söderberg's *Doktor Glas* (Söderberg 1998; *Doctor Glas*). I have written on this in some detail elsewhere, so will simply point out some salient connections (Brantly 2016). The book is in a diary format and, except for a brief dream description, is realistic to the extent that you can follow Dr. Glas around on a map of Stockholm. Dr. Glas is a reluctant man of science who scarcely believes in his own power to cure anyone. He tries to make a moral decision (should he commit murder or not), even though traditional guides have failed him. Religion is not helpful (he murders the Reverend Gregorius, after all), the legal system is called into question (the Dreyfus case), and the writers of the Modern Breakthrough are deemed simply aeolian harps upon which the wind plays. He imagines himself to be the doctor who is removing diseased flesh in his justifications to himself, but the murder of Rev. Gregorius achieves nothing positive. In a final epiphany inspired by the overture from *Lohengrin*,

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[5] There are many who would see decadence as a close relative or even a form of modernism (Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Calinescu 1987), for example), especially since Charles Baudelaire is considered a portal figure for both movements. George C. Schoolfield in *A Baedeker of Decadence: Charting a Literary Fashion*, 1884–1927 (Schoolfield 2003) considers decadence "a literary fashion," which it undoubtedly is. I am making use of decadence in my narrative of 20th century trends as a transitional phase between the Modern Breakthrough and modernism, and as such, it carries features of both.

Dr. Glas is staring into the modernist abyss: "Thou shalt not ask!" (Söderberg 1998, p. 84). If you do, you will find there is no meaning or order to life, only chaos.

The remaining texts of this first third of the course illustrate the emergence of modernism. We read Knut Hamsun's *Sult* (Hamsun 1998; *Hunger*), a pioneering modernist work that is groundbreaking in terms of its narrative. August Strindberg's *Ett drömspel* (Strindberg 1975; *A Dreamplay*) demonstrates how modern drama evolves towards modernism, while noting that Strindberg himself had not rejected the existence of a God but, nonetheless, shared the modernist vision of human existence as a painful struggle. At last, we arrive at high modernism itself, in the form of the poems of Edith Södergran and Elmer Diktonius[6] and Pär Lagerkvist's short play, *Himlens hemlighet* (Lagerkvist 1966; *The Secret of Heaven*). This is regrettably the only moment in the course in which Finland is represented, and poetry for that matter, in part because of my own lack of a command of Finnish. Similarly, the literature of modern Iceland is for me a closed book, so apologies to both Finland and Iceland for my neglect. It has perhaps already been noticed that I rely heavily on Swedish language texts, because that is my area of expertise; however, Denmark and Norway feature more strongly in the remaining two sections of the course.

The Finland-Swedish modernists are fully in synch with European modernism, because of their unusual historical situation compared to the rest of Scandinavia. World War I seems to confirm for European intellectuals that the world is chaotic and meaningless and science is a destructive rather than constructive force. Finland was impacted by the Russian Revolution and ravaged by civil war at this time. The Swedish-speaking minority of Finland responded literarily in a similar fashion to the rest of Europe. The Finnish-speaking majority experienced these historical events as a moment of national emergence, so modernist elements did not enter Finnish language literature until much later. One might also attribute a later emergence of modernism in Norway (according to some) to Norway's independence in 1905, compounded by the German occupation during World War II.[7] The combination of both these historic events would naturally promote a stronger sense of nationalism in Norwegian literature than is found in either Sweden or Denmark. Denmark, which was also occupied during World War II, delays embracing modernism until the war is over, and Sweden's neutrality and relative postwar affluence is thought to be behind its earlier modernist breakthrough (Eysteinsson and Liska 2007, pp. 834–35).

Pär Lagerkvist is fully in step with the trends of European modernism, having written more-or-less a modernist manifesto for Swedish literature in *Ordkonst och Bildkonst* (Lagerkvist 1913; Verbal Art and Pictorial Art) at the tender age of 22. In the context of Sweden, he is somewhat unique, and modernism is not at all the dominant mode of literary expression. In the 1910s, there is a revisiting of socially engaged realism (the shadow of the Modern Breakthrough) and three of the giants of Swedish literature from the previous century (Heidenstam, Karlfeldt, and Lagerlöf) are still major literary forces. Even so, the work of Lagerkvist, Södergran, and Diktonius, enables the presentation of Nordic modernism in our narrative as a part of the larger trends of European modernism. When the Young Man of Lagerkvist's *Secret of Heaven* jumps off the planet into a bottomless abyss, it is the darkest moment of the semester and modernism at its most bleak.

4. The Evolution of Modernism and the Modern Breakthrough

The second section of the course covers from 1930 through 1960. The 1930s are seen against the historical backdrop of global economic depression. Working class literature is given as the dominant trend in Scandinavia and represented by Ivar Lo-Johansson's "Kyss handen, trälinna!" ("Kiss My Hand, Slave") from *Statarnoveller* (Lo-Johansson 1936; Tenant Farmer Tales) and the first chapter of

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[6] The poems we read in our in-house translation are: Södergran's "The day cools," "Vierge Moderne," "On Foot I Had to Cross the Solar System," "The Stars," "The Land that is Not" and Diktonius' "Red-Eemili," and "The Jaguar."

[7] Torben Brostrøm makes this suggestion in "Modernismens gennembrud i nordisk litteratur" (Brostrøm 1991, p. 21; Modernism's Breakthrough in Nordic Literature).

Kvinnor och äppelträd (Martinson 1933; *Women and Apple Trees*), "Mother's Baths," by Moa Martinson (Martinson 1989). This type of literature, social realism, is one of the strengths of the Nordic countries, a part of the enduring legacy of the Modern Breakthrough. Some short stories by Cora Sandel, "Larsens" ("Larsen's") and "Lort-Katrine" ("Shit-Katrine") from *En blå sofa: og andre noveller* (Sandel 1985; *A Blue Sofa and other Stories*), show that even non-working-class writers were interested in social issues, such as gender and class.[8] The thirties are, however, very much a mixed bag. There are modernist experiments, alongside the historical novels of Sigrid Undset, and the fantastic tales of Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen). Since I have written a book on Isak Dinesen, she gets a lecture to herself at this point, which notes that she is not writing like anyone else, and so it is difficult to fit her into greater literary trends (Brantly 2002, pp. 4–6).[9] World War II is given as a major catalyst for the rise of modernism to literary dominance in Scandinavia. Unlike the case with World War I, all of the Nordic countries were drawn into the conflict (despite Sweden's official neutrality), and the message of meaninglessness and chaos was driven home. The concept of existentialism is introduced at this time, primarily as a strategy for coping with the modernist view that the world has no meaning. Another bullet list comes in handy to explain existentialism, with apologies to Jean Paul Sartre:

Crisis:

- A problem of identity: Who am I? Existentialism attempts to answer the question.
- The experience of one's own life or existence lacking a purpose or meaning.
- A feeling of alienation. One feels fear and loneliness in the face of our well-known world. The world is seen as absurd. Values have broken down.

Response:

- One must accept one's own fear, loneliness, and death as basic conditions of life. This provides a type of freedom.
- The freedom is the freedom of choice, where you are not tied to anything. You can choose to take over your own life. You have also chosen responsibility.

Some short stories by Martin A. Hansen "Gartneren, Dyret og Barnet" (Hansen 1965; "The Gardener, the Beast, and the Child") and "Soldaten og Pigen" (Hansen 1972; "The Soldier and the Girl") exemplify this Nordic response to the war. Both the eponymous gardener and the soldier are deep in an existential crisis: The gardener because he no longer wants the responsibility of being a gardener and a father, and the soldier because of what he has done in the war. Both characters move from a space of structure and order to a place of chaos, a trash lot inhabited by strange beasts and a marl pit strewn with refuse, respectively. Despite his wish to leave his ordinary life, the gardener chooses to continue to call out for his son, knowing that he will have to take responsibility for having robbed his own child of innocence when he stepped aside. The soldier's choice is more ambiguous: Either he comes to terms with his deeds after speaking to a dead girl and will leave the place or he chooses to remain at the pit, a piece of society's refuse, and commit suicide. Pär Lagerkvist's *Dvärgen* (Lagerkvist 1973; *The Dwarf*) engages the idea of human evil as a universal element throughout time, yet shows the reader that there is a choice to be made: Do we keep the dwarf in the dungeon, or release him? This is a step away from the despair depicted in the final moments of *The Secret of Heaven*, when the Young Man jumps off the planet and plunges into a bottomless abyss. Such modernist despair leaves the door open for tyrants, like Hitler, to take over. This section is rounded off with Ingmar Bergman's *Smultronstället* (Bergman 1957; *Wild Strawberries*), which is undeniably a masterpiece,

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[8] Let me acknowledge that Cora Sandel is often seen as an early Norwegian modernist, but that is not evident in these two short stories.

[9] Although some have tried to make Dinesen into a modernist or even a throwback to romanticism, my personal view is that she has more in common with postmodernism. The stories we read are "The Roads Round Pisa" and "The Dreamers" from *Seven Gothic Tales* (Dinesen 1991).

though it is more literary than it is literature. It is a work easily read through the lens of existentialism and, at this point in the semester, students are grateful for the rather uplifting message that it is never too late to make new choices.

5. Postmodernism

The final section of the course is dedicated to postmodernism, peaking from 1960 through the present throughout the Western world. This is, once again, a moment when the course is not entirely in line with the wisdom of Nordic literary histories, which have had some difficulty with the term "postmodernism," since it has been seen as connected to cultural conservatism and superficiality.[10] In the wake of her Nordic Council Literature Prize for her novel *Bang* in 1997 (Willumsen 1996), Dorrit Willumsen came and spoke to my Masterpieces class. When I informed her that I presented her as a postmodernist, she said in a mildly baffled voice, "But in Denmark they tell me I am a modernist!" I use this anecdote to this day to illustrate how these labels are generated by scholars, and the writers themselves write the world as they see it, without concerning themselves overmuch with labels. I have made the argument for Nordic postmodernism elsewhere (Brantly 2017, pp. 9–13), and the texts read in this section of the class continue to be the most popular among the American college students, presumably because they finally see a world that seems familiar. I make the point that postmodernism is not a radical break from modernism, but rather a shift in tone, interests, and attitudes. The shortest definition of postmodernism I can provide is that it is modernism that has developed a sense of humor. The bullet list is as follows[11]:

- Contemporary existence is in a state of confusion.
- The world is absurd—The modernist quest for coherence is abandoned.
- Contradictory orders of reality—A taste for science fiction and the eruption of the fabulous into the secular world.
- An interest in the products of culture. (A distinction between "high" and "low" culture is dissolved. Styles are mixed. Commercialism and the media are key players.)
- Disbelief in traditional literary values. (Originality is challenged through parody, narrative authority is undermined, stories lack closure, the canon is questioned, as is the "normal self")
- Radical questioning of the integrity of language.

The first point indicates an adjustment in attitude compared to high modernism. The long-lasting struggle with the void caused by God's death has diminished to the point that it is no longer a primary issue. One has grown accustomed to the lack of a purposeful design to the world, and rather than feeling the isolation and anguish caused by being abandoned by God, we are left with a mild case of confusion. The world appears absurd at times, because of the lack of reason and purpose, and one simply acknowledges that is the way things are. Our sense of reality is challenged by realities that contradict our common everyday experience of reality, whether that be by presenting a dystopian future or allowing patently "unreal" elements to disrupt the illusion of a plausible fiction. This draws attention to the fact that narratives, stories, fictions are made things, and not a representation of reality. While possessing an interest in both social issues and artistic issues, postmodernism's main focus can be stated as an interest in the products of culture. The dynamics of cultural construction are of chief interest. Cultural attitudes are examined and exposed as constructed, not natural. Modernism took itself very seriously, and literature was a form of high culture. Postmodernism calls into question

[10] For example, the Danish critic Morten Kyndrup, in his 1997 essay on "Postmodernism in Scandinavia" (Kyndrup 1997), suggests that postmodernism did not really make it to Sweden and it has already died out in the rest of Scandinavia (p. 377). A lively press debate raged in Sweden about the existence of Swedish postmodernism in the 1980s, and soundly rejected it, for the most part. My book, *The Historical Novel, Transnationalism, and the Postmodern Era: Presenting the Past* (Brantly 2017) argues strongly and, I hope, persuasively, that postmodernism has been and is alive and well in Swedish literature.

[11] This list has been informed by my general reading about postmodernism, but has been most strongly influenced by Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (Hutcheon 1988).

the distinction between high and low culture (think Andy Warhol's soup cans or the proliferation of literate crime novels). Styles can be mixed, so that "serious" novels use the formulae of popular fiction. Narrative collage is a device that is sometimes used. Pervasive forces that appear to shape our modern culture are commercialism and the rise of media, so they become a strong interest. There is no objectivity, everybody wants something from you, and postmodern narratives tend to raise questions, rather than providing answers. The disbelief in traditional literary values strongly overlaps with the previous point of looking at the products of culture. Modernism valued originality and artists who created new forms of expression. Postmodernism holds the view that nothing is original under the sun, and parody can come into play, as well as literary interrogations of literary classics (see Dannie Abse's *The Strange Case of Dr. Simmonds and Dr. Glas* (Abse 2002) or Bengt Ohlsson's *Gregorius* (Ohlsson 2004), both of which re-visit the story of *Doctor Glas*). Occasionally this can result in nostalgia, a painful longing for a simpler time with clear-cut values (see the popularity of Jane Austen films, paired with the postmodern parody *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* (Grahame-Smith 2009)). The protests of the 1960s brought about a suspicion of authority in all of its forms, including narrative authority. As mentioned before, there is a tendency to raise questions rather than provide answers, which often results in texts with a lack of narrative closure. Readers must provide their own answers, if there are any. Connected with questioning the distinction between "high" and "low" literature is the general process of questioning the literary canon: Why are there so many white men? This, in turn, leads to a questioning of the "normal self," which for the purposes of the class, is defined as "white, male, and monied." This construction of the "normal self" has left its stamp all over Western culture. Finally, the modernist suspicion of language has been ratcheted up a few notches, and is now a radical suspicion of language. All language can do is re-present reality; it is not reality itself. At the same time, there is an acknowledgement that language is power. Whoever crafts the most persuasive story or the most attractive advertisement will have an impact on people's choices. Therefore, one must remain aware of the manipulative power of language.

There is too little time left in the semester at this point to provide examples of all of these issues, but students quickly get the point nonetheless, because they are able to find examples of these things everywhere. They are surrounded by them. We start by looking at two different approaches to feminism from the 1970s: Bjørg Vik's "Portrommene" (Vik 1984; "The Entryways") and "Oppbrudet" (Vik 1984; "The Breakup") read in combination with an excerpt from Gerd Brantenberg's *Egalias Døtre* (Brantenberg 1985; *Egalia's Daughters*). After Moa Martinson and Cora Sandel, Bjørg Vik's tales seem somewhat familiar, and not particularly postmodern. Even so, the third-person narrator undermines her authority by taking the perspective of one of the characters. The point is to explore the experience of "non-normal selves," women, and move them towards the realm of "normal." Gerd Brantenberg creates a contradictory reality in which women or "wim" are the dominant normal selves and explores all the ramifications of that power shift. Language presents the most obvious realm of impact and, in the brilliant English translation, all the "sexist" terms in the language are red-flagged and flipped (Men = menwim; Women = wim; fele = female; mafele = male). Dorrit Willumsen's "Voksdukken" (Willumsen 1982; "The Wax Doll") explores the shallowness and the existential void created by our commercial/consumer society. Jan, the handsome wax mannequin from a wax museum, is much easier for our unnamed narrator to relate to than the complicated man who becomes her husband. The husband does not remain complicated for long, as he is apparently murdered while the couple is on their honeymoon. When my class asked Willumsen who had committed the murder, she replied "I don't know," and suggested three different possibilities (the doll, the narrator, or a random stranger). That was a splendid example of relinquishing narrative authority. Herbjørg Wassmo's "Hvor nært er nært nok" (Wassmo 1983; "How Close is Close Enough") provides a terrifying look at the extremes to which commercial media might go to make a profit (a magazine has stapled live birds into a magazine). P.C. Jersild's *En levande själ* (Jersild 1998; *A Living Soul*) has long been a favorite of the pre-med students in the class. The narrator is a human brain in an aquarium in a laboratory. The novel explores what it is that makes us human, the ethics of using experimental animals, and the compromising

effect that a profit motive can have upon scientific research. Jersild most obligingly wrote his own postmodern prequel to the novel, *Ypsilon* (Jersild 2012), which the students can only hear about, since it has not yet been translated. The final novel of the semester is Peter Høeg's *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse før sne* (Høeg 1995; *Smilla's Sense of Snow*). Smilla challenges the normal self in terms of both gender stereotypes and mixed ethnicity. The novel mixes "high" and "low" in that it is a best-selling mystery/thriller with valuable literary and cultural points to make. A dash of science fiction is included in the form of the meteor that might be a silicon-based life form. There is ample confusion as Smilla searches for an elusive truth, which seems absurd when it is revealed, and despite the conventions of the mystery genre there is a lack of closure. The very last line tells us: "There will be no resolution" (Høeg 1995, p. 469).

6. Conclusions

This course tells a simplified narrative of the Nordic countries moving from the Modern Breakthrough via decadence to modernism, which, due to the passage of time and historical and cultural change, transitions to postmodernism. By focusing on this narrative and highlighting the pioneers of Scandinavian literature, the Nordic countries are presented as solid participants in European literary and cultural history. Further, the social realism of the Modern Breakthrough emerges as one of the Nordic countries' distinct contributions to world literature. This interest in social realism never really dies out, and I would argue that it has resurfaced with a vengeance in the Nordic crime literature that has become so popular across the world. The Nordic countries have been on the cutting edge of literary developments, yet they have their own distinct voices.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Article

Nordic Modernists in the Circus. On the Aesthetic Reflection of a Transcultural Institution

Annegret Heitmann

Institut für Nordische Philologie Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1, 85304 München, Germany; annegret.heitmann@lrz.uni-muenchen.de

Received: 1 October 2018; Accepted: 31 October 2018; Published: 6 November 2018

Abstract: Around 1900 the circus was not only an important and highly popular cultural phenomenon all over Europe, but also an inspiration to writers and artists at the onset of Modernism. As an intrinsically intermedial form with international performers, it can be seen as an expression of certain important characteristics of modern life like innovation, mobility, dynamics, speed and vigor. Its displays of color and excitement, of bodies in motion and often provocative gender relations were experienced by authors as a challenge to create new aesthetic forms. However, the circus does not only figure prominently in well-known works by Kafka and Thomas Mann and paintings by Degas, Macke or Leger, it is also thematized in texts by Scandinavian authors. When writers like Henrik Ibsen, Herman Bang, Ola Hansson and Johannes V. Jensen referred to the circus in their works, they represented it as an experience of modernity and addressed themes like alterity, mobility, voyeurism, new gender relations and ambivalent emotions. As a self-reflexive sign, the circus even served to represent the fragile status of art in modernity and thus made an important contribution to the development of Modernism.

Keywords: Scandinavian modernism; cross-fertilization; circus; meta-cultural code; modernist aesthetics

Herman Bang, one of the most important late 19th century Scandinavian modernists, was a great admirer of the circus. He regularly visited the performances put on in Copenhagen by the great circus companies Renz and Schumann, but also took an interest in smaller, family-run traveling circuses and their humble lives. Even on his many trips through Europe, he frequently found time to attend the circus, be it in Hamburg, Paris, Ostende or Berlin. His enthusiasm for this institution of popular culture stayed with him all his life and for more than 30 years he reported on performances, artists and animal tamers in newspapers and magazines (cf. Heitmann 2019, in press). His interest coincided with the so-called golden age of the circus between 1850 and 1920, when it was the leading attraction and medial experience in Europa and North America and immensely popular with audiences of all social classes. Why this institution was so attractive and the way in which it influenced not only Bang's writing, but also other members of the generation of early modernists in Scandinavia, is the subject of the following investigation.

My conception of modernism is derived from Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, who already pointed out in 1976 that Scandinavian literature was crucial to the early phase of the larger European movement of modernism: "In trying to pin Modernism down—tentatively and crudely—in terms of men, books and years, attention is first drawn to Scandinavia" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1976, p. 37). Modernism in this sense is a post-naturalist form of cultural criticism that is disconcerted and threatened by the progressive modernization of society with its economic, technological, social and discursive components, offering liberation and alienation at the same time. It included a new perception of this rapidly changing reality and a view of human subjectivity as anomic and threatened, especially as the power of the unconscious and the irrational became an object of interest. Realization of the gap between inner and outer aspects of subjectivity,

and of reality, led on to skepticism about the very status of language and communication. All this finds its aesthetic expression in a wide variety of narrative cleavages, ambivalences, and anti-mimetic tendencies, as well as in narrative austerity or provocation.

The circus, with its focus on showmanship, entertainment and thrill, seems hardly to touch upon the concerns of modernist literature. As such, it generally falls on the low end of the spectrum between high and low art; far from a respectable form of artistic expression, it is simply considered an escape from reality (Simon 2014, p. 16). It is remarkable, however, that this form of entertainment was successful especially during the leap in modernization society saw in the late 19th century (on the following cf. Kirschnick 2012; Simon 2014; Daniel 2016). While traveling jesters and entertainers have always existed, the circus as a specific phenomenon is usually considered to have emerged in 1780, when the English trick-rider Philip Astley (1742–1814) built an arena with stands and a diameter of 13 m that was ideally suited for trick riding. Horses were thus at the heart of the early circus, and even today all large circus companies have acts with horses in the repertoire. As the circus became more popular, and accordingly more professional, artists such as jugglers and tightrope walkers, contortionists and knife-throwers were added, as were—later, in higher buildings and tents—the trapeze acts that made the dream of flying come alive. With colonial trade came wild animals, such as lions, tigers and elephants that were presented either in animal shows or as animal taming acts—those put on by female tamers were particularly popular. Although the training techniques gradually became less cruel, moving away from the ruthless and violent means used initially, these acts nevertheless continued to demonstrate man's superiority over the animal world. A light-hearted—and occasionally self-critical—part of these circus programmes were the appearances of clowns, whose comedic interludes often parodied the circus itself. The clowns' usually silent acts staged not only acrobatics but displayed a world through the looking-glass and the reversal of all norms. At the apex of circus history, when fixed installations and buildings enhanced the possibilities of the circus, grand spectacles known as pantomimes were staged in the ring that re-enacted battles or historical events. Zirkus Busch, for example, staged the Herrmannschlacht (Germanic victory of AD9 in the Forest of Teuteburg) in 1910, a performance that was not merely a technical marvel, but also a political demonstration. Even more spectacular were the water pantomimes staged in flooded arenas with mock naval battles, magnificent waterfalls and illuminated fountains.

"By the end of the nineteenth century", writes Robert A. Jones, "[the European circus] had reached a zenith in its development and, despite an inherent outsider status, had become an integral part of the European social fabric." (Jones 1985, p. 9). Around the turn of the 20th century, the circus was the most impactful medium of popular culture, drawing huge crowds with its colorful and exotic offerings that appealed to people of all social strata. In its international ensembles and itinerant, seasonal character (cf. Carmeli 1988) the circus further reflects the increasing interconnectedness of the world and the growing mobility of its inhabitants. Music, attractive lighting, wild animals, peak physical performances and sparkling costumes appealed to the senses of the audience, creating excitement and spinning the illusion of an entirely different world far removed from every-day life.

Despite its illusion of alterity, this world was, however, engaged in a vibrant exchange of ideas with other media and arts (cf. Jones 1985, pp. 27–40). It would be wrong to strictly differentiate between the circus and the similarly popular forms of cabaret and pantomime, since they too used physical performance art, music and exoticism, as did the forms of free dance en vogue at the time. There was also a certain affinity between the circus and poster art, which developed at the same time and was similarly located somewhere between high and popular culture. On the one hand, the poster served as the circus' most important advertising medium, while on the other, the circus was an important motif for the poster genre. That the circus affected other art forms is particularly obvious in pictorial art, and visible not only in the well-known posters by Toulouse-Lautrec, but also in paintings and drawings by Degas, Seurat and Tissot (cf. Berger and Winkler 1983; Konrad 2012). Many well-known names of impressionist art and post-impressionist aesthetics such as Renoir, Picasso, Macke, Beckmann, Klee, Delaunay and Chagall engaged with motifs from the circus to develop new

forms of expression in form, colour and perspective. The colorful and fast-paced dynamics of the shows and the simultaneity of different circus acts provided a challenge for the two-dimensional and static medium of pictorial art; a challenge that elicited aesthetic innovations. In the words of Robert A. Jones: "It is thus no overstatement to assert that the cultural matrix of the era in question was shaped by the circus and those related forms such as the pantomime, the music hall, varieté, cabaret, and revue that borrowed from, as well as contributed to, its form and content" (Jones 1985, p. 38).

This dynamic that challenged pictorial art is analogous to the rapid development modern society was experiencing at the time. The exoticism and itinerancy of the circus offered a reflection of colonialism and an expanding and ever more densely entangled world. The international ensembles of artists and the fact that they attracted audiences from all social classes seemed to give shape to a democratic, international spirit, while the daring performances of female artists and animal tamers gave expression to changing gender norms and a new body image. At the same time, the circus became increasingly commercialized and technologically more advanced, mirroring the dynamics of progressive modernity. The continuous growth of the companies, their pursuit of record-breaking accomplishments and constant innovation went hand in hand not only with developments in technology and society, but also with people's response to it through increasing restlessness and nervousness. In many respects, the circus can thus be considered a mirror image of modernity.

Paul Boissac has coined the expression "metacultural code" (Bouissac 1976, p. 7) in order to stress that the circus refers to the constitutive elements of contemporary culture. Although the milieu of the circus has always been the subject of curiosity and mystification, and its performances are founded in alterity and exoticism, it is impossible to deny its links and references to the world surrounding it (Christen 2010, p. 77). Foucault's concept of heterotopia may serve to describe that the circus is both in the midst of society and outside it (Foucault 1984). It represents an alternative, looking-glass world that nevertheless echoes many characteristics of modernity and thus brings them out with crystalline clarity: we find dynamic acceleration and innovation, an enterprising love of risk, diversity and international connectivity, a push for equality, and a new physicality and understanding of the body. It will hardly come as a surprise that this looking-glass nature proved challenging not merely to pictorial art, but also the narrative media of film and literature. Some research has been done on the circus as a subject of early film (Joest 2008; Christen 2010). By comparison, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the circus motif in modern Scandinavian literature, even though several prominent Scandinavian modernists, such as Henrik Ibsen and Herman Bang, Johannes V. Jensen, Ola Hansson and Selma Lagerlöf, as well as less internationally renowned (and non-modernist) authors such as Holger Drachmann, Lars Dilling (Dilling 1884), Joakim Reinhard (Reinhard 1882) and Carl Muusmann (Muusmann 1905, 1906), thematized the circus in literary reflections written in the period around 1900. Whenever the circus appears in literary works of Scandinavian Modernism, it seems to operate on two different levels: on the one hand, it acts as meta-cultural code that refers to phenomena and developments in modern society, while on the other, literature is using the mediality of the circus to shape its own poetics. Whereas the first point affects the themes used and stages the circus as a signifier of alterity, dynamic change, nervousness or risk, the second point directs our attention to how this topos was functionalized to inform literary aesthetics. In the following, these two dimensions shall be traced across five very different examples.

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A real theme of the circus is not part of Henrik Ibsen's dramatic oeuvre; in fact, it is more aptly described as a telling gap or omission ("Leerstelle"; cf. Iser 1970). Samfundets støtter (1877; The Pillars of Society), the first of his 'dramas of society', is about the modernization of Norway, about railways and financial speculation, about the labor question and women's rights. These issues of social history are joined with themes of power and privilege, hypocrisy and guilt, moral norms and double standards. Since the "pillars of society" are concerned on the one hand with profitable innovation, but on the other with the preservation of their traditional privileges, these developments are discussed

using procedures of in- and exclusion. The pivotal scene that—in Ibsen's typical manner—causes the guilt-ridden entanglements of the past to be brought to light and rattles the strongholds of power occurs towards the end of the first act. From inside the living room of Consul Bernick, the leading representative of this small-town society, we look out into the street and spy a circus company that has come by ship from America: "et helt beriderselskab med heste og dyr" (Ibsen [1877] 2008, p. 182) ["a whole circus company [...] with horses and animals"]. While the young son finds this new arrival exciting, the grown-ups immediately agree in rejecting this alien entity: to them, they are "fæle mennesker", "gøglere af den rette sort" (p. 182) ["horrid people", "real kind of jugglers"]. The negative terminology used goes hand in hand with a critical appraisal of their external appearance. This is further intensified when a bearded man they consider the director is said to look "som en røver" (182) ["like a robber"]. A woman with a knapsack is judged "direktørens madam" (182) ["the director's madame"] in a similarly pejorative fashion. A haughty glance down at the foreigners from above is enough to both judge them and produce distance. As 'travelling folk' who invade the town with "hestene og dyrene [...] og Amerikanerne" (183) ["horses and animals [...] and Americans"], they are essentially the threatening "other", and as such, the window scene ends with the suggestion: "Skulde vi kanske trække forhængene for?" (183) ["Should we maybe close the curtains?"]. The dichotomy of inside and out, of above and below, of self and other could hardly be expressed more emphatically. The group is described as "udlændinger" (184) ["foreigners"] and invites moralizing judgment simply due to this assumption: they lack "denne rodfæstede sømmelighedsfølelse" (184) ["this deeply rooted decency"], which is characteristic of the self and they "sætter sig op imod skik og gode sæder" (184) ["oppose traditions and good manners"], even though they have taken but a few steps into town. The mechanisms of xenophobia and exclusion are traced here in but a few lines of dialogue. Members of a circus who lack 'roots' are apparently the best example of alterity and the acts of rejection it feeds. Since it would inevitably be founded on prejudice, a portrayal of the circus itself is unnecessary—it can simply remain a blank ("Leerstelle") in the hierarchies of social power.

The simple dichotomies Ibsen's dramas seem to construct, however, always turn out to be fragile. The rigid contrast between identity and alterity built up in the scene is undermined by the twists that the apparent circus madam and the bearded director are in fact family members who have returned from America. They stand for "luften på prærierne" (186) ["the air in the prairies"], for enlightenment, change and morality. The action the drama unfolds around this need not concern us here, but it is clear that the alleged alterity of the circus (and the Americans) is exposed as a prejudice. Its exoticism is based on an erroneous assumption and the other is revealed as part of the self. Ibsen thus uses the circus as a topos for perceived alterity that it is deconstructed over the course of the play. The self—the narrow world of the 'pillars of society'—is ultimately enriched by the invaders, who can no longer be shut out by drawing the curtains. As such, the circus folk also hint at the impossibility of withdrawing from the modern world, at the necessity of opening up to the other(s) that make dynamic change possible by breaking up the encrusted double standards of narrow-minded society. In the aesthetics of Ibsen's drama, the circus thus signifies two things: first, the invasion of alterity into the narrow world of the self that triggers the dramatic conflict; and second, as the blank space that exposes the mechanisms of ignorance-based prejudice.

This kind of confrontation with the other is contoured even more sharply in Johannes V. Jensen's Himmerland-story "Wombwell" (1904) with its description of the arrival of an animal show in tranquil Himmerland, based on the historical menagerie called "Wombwell" that visited North Jutland with 500 exotic animals in 1888 (cf. Jørgensen 2016). Both the historical and Jensen's fictional menagerie are not only exotic but also dynamic and of overwhelming size: "den ene underfulde Vogn tonede frem efter den anden, Slag i Slag" (Jensen [1904] 1933, p. 154) ["one wonderful cart appeared after the other, in quick succession"]—"Karavanen strakte sig tværs paa hele Dalen" (155) ["the caravan stretched out over the whole valley"]. Wombwell's animal show thus joins otherness with aspects of modernity that in entering into the closed rural community ultimately instils in it an awareness of the wider world.

The confrontation is accentuated by the narrator's irony that brings out the limited point of view of the Himmerlanders by describing the travelers as "vildfremmede Folk" (149) ["completely [literally: wildly] strange people"], whose foreignness is apparent already in the fact that "at de ikke kunne snakke Dansk" (149) ["that they could not speak Danish"]. That all things other are associated with the wild is revealed by the defensive stance evident from the fact that the circus folk are repeatedly labeled strangers, "[som] snakkede som Kværne paa deres gale Maal" (152) ["[who] talked like mills in their wrong language"]. Even their horses are perceived as "paafaldende udenlandsk" (149) ["conspicuously foreign"]. The irony serves to highlight the relational context dependence of otherness (cf. Müller-Funk 2016, p. 16) by establishing the Himmerlanders' perspective as the norm and acknowledging Danish as the only comprehensible language.

The description and effect of otherness are intensified in the encounters with exotic animals described in the following. Here we find processes of acculturation, such as when the North Jutland farmers compare the tiger to "vor Missekat" (179) ["our pussy-cat"] and are particularly taken with the Zebra, because it is similar to their home-grown horses. The wildebeest, however, causes some confusion, since it seems a cow to some, while others are reminded of a horse with horns: "Den Betragtning, at den var et Dyr for sig, der kunde ligne baade en Ko og en Hest, laa ikke nær for nogen" (180) ["The idea that it was an animal in its own right, which might resemble both a cow and a horse did not occur to any of them"]. These understandable efforts at categorizing the unknown thus entail acts of appropriation that do not permit for otherness and even strip it away (cf. Bauman 2003, p. 121). How unwilling the villagers are to open up to the unknown is evident in their encounter with the camels, whom they do not care about at all, since they "syntes dem ellers overdrevne og urimelige af Skabning" (181) ["appeared to them as exaggerated and unreasonable creations"]. The circus animals bring out different experiences of otherness, all of which keep the unknown at a distance and avoid engaging with the experience of difference (cf. Waldenfels 1990, p. 59).

Even before the animal show opens, the Himmerlanders witness the typical tent necessary for such an event being set up. This process confronts them with a dynamic they were as yet unacquainted with, and which encapsulates another aspect of the experiences of alterity and modernity that Jensen associates with the circus in this text. The erection of the tent is primarily characterized by an atmosphere of "Hurtighed, Hurtighed" (172) ["speed, speed"]. Wombwell himself harshly oversees the work with whip in hand "og der var kun et Tempo i ham, Firspring af baade Heste og Mennesker" (172) ["and there was only one speed in him, full gallop of both horses and men"]. The draft horses are whipped, the men "sled, saa det sang i deres Ben" (172) ["toiled so it sang in their legs"], men yell and call to one another, hurtling about; "der arbejdedes som i Feber" (175) ["the work was done like in a fever"] is the general verdict. "Men Wombwell pressede paa. Han vilde Menageriet aabnet i Aften, koste hvad det koste vilde" (174) ["But Wombwell pressured them. He wanted the menagerie opened tonight, at all costs"]. One of the core principles of modernity, that time is money, is given physical expression in this act of putting up the tent. The construction requires effort, strength, speed and "brutal Energi" (174) ["brutal energy"] and when it said that it "lignede [...] et Bombardement, en Sprængning og Beskydning" (174) ["resembled [. . .] a bombardment, an explosion and a shelling"], the violent connotations of the efforts demanded are revealed. The talk of rope and long poles, of wooden structures and their incredible weight, of "et uhyre Areal af Lærred" (175) ["an enormous area of canvas"], and even of "et Bjærg af Jærn" (176) ["a mountain of iron"], is reminiscent of processes of architectural modernization. Setting up the tent is similar to erecting a new building or an industrial park; the bustle, size and speed all echo the innovation and acceleration of progressive modernity. Even the metaphorical likening of the tent to a "Tropeblomst" (175) ["tropical flower"] or "Arken" (176) ["the Ark"] parallels the descriptions of industrial installations and buildings. From the point of view of the Himmerland villagers, the circus is a sign of the fast-paced, noisy juggernaut of modernity that inexorably progresses with great violence and at any cost. Even the roads and bridges have be reinforced to allow the heavy circus wagons to pass, and so even the infrastructural improvements that went hand in hand with industrialization enter into the text.

While the circus's mobility activates another topos of modernity, it also means that its disturbing alterity is temporary for the region it is visiting. And yet, the story tells of the long-term impact the visit of the menagerie had. Three young boys had bravely gone up to the big wagon and been allowed to sit up on the driver's seat and even take the reins. While their lack of timidity in the face of the unknown was partly due to their youth, it was also due to one of the boys' own existence as an outsider, who goes on to become a hero of sorts later in the story. Bitte-Niels is "et Sognebarn" (161) ["a parishioner"], allegedly an 'orphan', raised by the community because no one wants to acknowledge him. He has nothing to lose and, on this day, up on the coachman's box, he gains not only the admiring glances of the villagers (and various fathers, who can suddenly imagine having been the cause of Mette Skræderpige's secret pregnancy all those years ago), but also an expanded horizon, an awareness of the wider world. Looking into the distance from a hill on his way home from the animal show, he sees the sea for the first time in his life, which will later take him to America. This act literally expands his horizon. For the boy, the circus was thus not associated with alterity, exclusion and fear, but introduced him to new possibilities and opened his eyes to the sheer size of the world. The other people in the small world of Himmerland are also forever altered by their experiences of the alien novelties of modernity; the sheer sight of the vast wagon train "blev aldrig siden glemt, det berørte mange med en Oplevelsens Panik, saa at det gussede i dem" (155) ["was never since forgotten, it touched many of them with a panic of experience, so that they shuddered"]. In this remote region of the Northern Jutland, the arrival of the circus stands for the shock of modernity, characterized by internationalization, technology and acceleration. Aesthetically, the confrontation with alterity and modernity is achieved mainly by means of the narrator's irony that presents the limited perspective of the villagers without comment, suggestively making the reader identify with them and thus intensifying the shocking impact of the unknown. But since the readers know that Aalborg is not "Alverden" (151) ["the whole world"] and English is not a 'false' language, their view of the events is doubled: Himmerland is both core and periphery.

The effects the circus on its audiences, which Jensen treats in a rather sociological manner, are the theme of a poem by Ola Hansson that concentrates on the individual psychological reactions to a performance. The volume Dikter (1884; Poems) contains the short poem "På circus" ["In the circus"] that describes the perspectives of two visitors to the circus, "Jag" ["I"] and "Han" ["He"]. The form of the poem with its rhymed, rhythmic four-line stanzas, each with three stressed syllables, evokes—through its regular and forward-driving rhythm—the round ring of the circus and perhaps even the steady trot of the horses' hooves as they canter around it. The rhythm thus alludes to the space of the arena and the playful levity of circus entertainment, to which the poem's two protagonists respond quite differently.

The speaker of the first half is bored, skeptical, melancholic; he snoozes during the performance and finds the acts dull. While other members of the audience applaud a clown's funny act, in which he is towed around the ring tied to a donkey's tail, the speaker of the poem is concerned only with himself: "när sinnet trevar i dimma/och tanken är slapp och slak" (Hansson [1884] 1997, p. 49) ["when the mind is groping in the dark/and the thought is listless and slack"]. He is a typical example of the world-weary fin de siècle generation, a 'tired man', who cannot escape his ennui even in the circus. On the contrary, to him the performance seems nothing more than a portrayal of life: "på livets cirkus träda/vi alla vid slumpens svans" (50) ["in the circus of life/we all tread on the tail of luck"]. The razzle-dazzle showmanship of the performance equates to his experience of reality, which he tries to evade through his melancholia and ennui.

The spectator in the second part of the poem is his polar opposite: "Han klappar vid mästerstycken/av äkta, ädel sport/och stirrar med lystna blickar/på former av prima sort." (50) ["He applauds at masterpieces/of genuine, noble sport/and stares with lusty gaze/at forms of a super kind"]. He is enthralled by the spectacle of the performances, the words "sport" und "prima" are signals of modernity that attract this circus-goer. Since he watches the performance with a "lusty gaze" and it gives him "[e]n kittlande rysning" (50) ["tingling shiver"], it even has an actual physical

impact on him. It creates excitement and thrill that he can feel in "ben och hud" (50) ["bone and skin"]. This spectator is a voyeur, who enjoys the exhibition of muscles and bodies, experiencing the sensual thrills of the circus like an "eldskur" (51) ["shower of flame"].

The poem progresses from the dozing man of the opening line all the way to "blodfull sinnlighet" (51) ["blood-filled sensuousness"], which are the final words of the last line. It traces two extremes of reception, both contemporary: the blasé, passive flaneur and the engaged, nervous voyeur. Both have their acts in the "circus of life" and the same circus performance serves both ways of life. The poem references contemporary discourses on the body and its nervous system (cf. Brandstetter 2008) that revolve around energy and its loss, which find their most extreme expression in listlessness and hypertension. The concern is less with (sociologically determinable) alterity and more with (psychologically relevant) emotions. The sensuality of the performances, the music, costumes, lighting and colour, but especially the sensuous display of bodies arouses and satisfies emotions. The poem's evocative language ("sinnlig skälvning" 50, ["sensuous shudder"], "stigande attrå" 50, ["rising desire"], metaphors ("eldskur", "blodfull") and rhythm, as well as onomatopoeic phrases ("musikkens klingklang" 50; ["musical tinkling"] give form to this affective dimension. Unlike the first two examples, the circus is now not the other, but identical to the self's experience of modernity as "the circus of life"; and as such, its nature can determine the poem's form.

The circus' emotional dimension is given a more intense narrative expression in Herman Bang's "Les quatre diables". The novella appeared in 1890 in the periodical København and was published as a separate book edition in the same year. The publication of 1895 saw a number of alterations by the author and was given a Danish title, but the following is based on the first edition. The text is about four trapeze artists who have known each other since their grim childhood and have been performing together since. After one of the members of this group, called 'De fire Djævle' ['The four Devils'], realizes that her trapeze partner has fallen in love with another woman, she causes both herself and her partner to plummet to their deaths during a performance. The anticipation of such a catastrophic fall is what keeps the circus-audience in the suspense—it becomes a cruel reality in Bang's narrative.

The melodramatic elements of the story (cf. Heitmann 2011) emphasize the circus's affective potential: suffering and privations, erotically charged attractions, suspense and thrills, love, infidelity, murder and suicide. The melodrama (cf. Brooks 1976) is prevented from lapsing into kitsch by the sobering depiction of the circus as characterized by hard work, even violent drill, and of love as mere sexual desire. "Attraa" (Bang [1890] 2010, p. 48) ["lust"] and "den ubarmhjærtige Drift" (35) ["the relentless desire"], or even "den altødelæggende Drift" (46) ["the devastating desire"] are repeatedly mentioned to drive home the animalistic nature of the relationship between the trapeze artist Fritz and the female spectator. Both the depiction of the tryst and the description of the artists' performances centre on a body discourse that can be brought out particularly vividly in the world of the circus. The trapeze acts are scrutinized using eyeglasses: "Oui, oui, deres Hofter er nøgne . . . " (12) ["Oui, oui, their hips are naked . . . "] and the lack of corsets is noted. But this attention to physicality is not limited only to the voyeurs up in the boxes; the text itself relishes in it: again and again we read of "Nøgenhed" ["Nakedness"] and the visibility of muscles: "Som nøgne—hver Muskel saa's—virkede deres Kroppe" (12) ["Their bodies seemed naked—every muscle could be seen"]. Sweat, effort, strength, tension and "alle Fibrer i deres Krop" (12) ["all the fibers in their body"] are highlighted, as are the effect of the costumes and the razzle-dazzle world of the circus in enhancing the attractiveness of the bodies: "Et Nu saa' det ud, som om Djævlene fløj gennem en skinnende Stime af Guld, mens Støvet, der langsomt dalede, plettede deres Nøgenhed med tusinde Pailletter, der straalte." (14) ["For a moment it looked as if the Devils flew through a shining swarm of gold, while the dust that slowly fell, stained their nakedness with thousands of glittering sequins"].

When we are told that "Det var som om de berusedes ved deres egne Legemers Kraft" (27) ["It was as if they got drunk by the energy of their own bodies"], Bang's portrayal of the bodies picks up a contemporary discourse on strength and vitality that plays an important role in the history of science and ideas around the turn of the century. In his book Grundriß der Psychologie (Wundt 1896),

the German scholar Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) distinguished between so-called sthenic affects that are characterized by the body being under tension, and asthenic affects that manifest as weakness and listlessness (cf. Brandstetter 2008; Wennerscheid 2014). In Bang's story, the love affair causes the trapeze artist Fritz to lose strength, which seems to threaten his ability to perform: "han følte igen de kraftløse Musklers Svigten" (37) ["he felt again the failure of his feeble muscles"]. Desperately, he tries to regain his usual strength by training. The scene echoes an anxiety typical of the time, a fear of losing strength and energy, that from 1865 was encapsulated in the concept of entropy formulated by Rudolf Clausius. Decadent and Vitalist circles alike feared this loss of vitality, though their responses differed. Since contemporary culture was considered a closed system to which no new energy was being added, one felt or feared that one had fallen into a state of anemic powerlessness. With Fritz's anxieties and efforts, Bang's story contributes a plastic example to this discourse.

The text's focus on physicality correlates with an implied skepticism towards language. The lack of trust in the reliability of language-based communication finds a twofold expression in the circus world. On the one hand, the society of the circus is international and multilingual, while the language of the country it is currently touring in is perceived as foreign: "Det [fremmede Maal] lød komisk, saa de andre kom til; og de begyndte alle—Klowne og Gymnastikere og Damer—at le og raabe og vrænge, højt, hver paa sit Maal" (51) ["The [foreign language] sounded comical so that the others joined in; and they started—clowns and gymnasts and ladies—to laugh and shout and mock, loudly, everyone in their language"]. On the other hand, the work done in the circus is done in silence. The time the four artists spend together is dominated by a curt, French language of command; during their trapeze act, the four communicate using orders, such as "En avant—du courage" und "Ça va, ça va" (27). Beyond that, they hardly speak. We are repeatedly told that are silent when they are together; after the performance they sit "tause ligesom de andre [artister]" (14) ["silent just like the others"] und "Ingen af dem talte, og stille satte de sig ved Restaurantens vante Bord. Sejdlerne kom, og de drak i Tavshed" (49) ["None of them talked and quietly they sat down at their usual table in the restaurant. The beer mugs came and they drank silently"]. Their silence conveys that they cannot speak about the important things in their lives, be it their traumatic childhood experiences or their uncertain future. Language is not capable of expressing these fears and creating closeness. The often-cited verse of the waltz that accompanies their act, "Amour, amour", is ridiculed by what actually happens in the story. The circus is presented as a world skeptical of language, a world of bodies and illusions.

That the artistic feats are achieved only through hard, inhumane training, as we learn in a flashback to the artists' childhood days, is obscured by music, dazzling costumes, golden glitter and light effects. In Bang, the circus is a world of illusion founded on sublimation and repression. It corresponds to modernity due to its mercilessly competitive mentality, its readiness to take risks, and its illusionist capacities. Trapeze art brings out the 'as if' constitutive of illusions with particular poignancy, since the faux flight of the artists is repeatedly described using 'it was as if' phraseology. The circus world of illusions thereby echoes not only the fictional quality of the text itself, but also metonymically signifies the modern world, with its superficiality and treacherous modernization intent only on stimuli and satisfaction, as Bang observed in Gründerzeit Copenhagen (cf. Zerlang 2007).

If Bang's way of writing draws on ambivalent emotions, while also making use of melodramatic elements in this particular case, it seems to adopt central elements of the circus discourse. The question that follows from this observation is whether the circus is artistically equal to literature, whether the hierarchy of 'high' and 'low' art can at all be maintained. Moreover, the circus with its ambivalence of auratic and commercial elements calls into question the status of art in general. This problem of locating art and literature on a four-dimensional gradient between entertainment, economics, ideas and semanticization is touched upon in Selma Lagerlöf's story En Herregårdssägen (Lagerlöf 1899; The Tale of a Manor). Lagerlöf's status as a modern author long went unrecognized, not least because her stories are often set in premodern environments and have a naivistic diction adapted to the premodern setting. Accordingly, she also chooses a premodern form of the circus for this text; a small, traveling family company that roams the villages with horse and cart, tight-rope walkers and a blind musician.

The squalor of the company is intensified by the old age of the circus folk and by the fact that their performance is at best a distant echo of former splendor: "[Blomgren] och hans hustru voro gammalt cirkusfolk. Frau Blomgren var före detta miss Viola, och hon hade flugit fram över hästryggen" (11) ["[Blomgren] and his wife were old circus-folks. Mrs. Blomgren was former Miss Viola, and she had flown over the horse-back"]. But the circus had fired them, because Miss Viola had become too stout, and so they now travel the lands as just the two of them. "Man gav pantomimer, man trollade och jonglerade" (12) ["They gave pantomimes, performed magic and juggled"] and portly Mrs. Blomgren blows kisses into the audience.

At the heart of the complicated story, however, is Gunnar Hede, student, violinist and landowner's son, who loses his mind when he tries to save his father's estate with a lucrative deal involving a herd of goats. Henceforth he travels around as a 'Getabock' ['billy-goat'] and peddler without being aware of his identity. It is a story of mental illness, of a split personality and its cure by the power of love. He finally finds solace in Ingrid, the second main character, who had fallen in love with his violin music already as a child. As an orphan, she too suffers mental crises; lack of affection causes her to escape into illness and apparent death, from which she is brought back by altruism, affection and love. Using the naivist means of the fairy-tale and even elements of the horror story, Lagerlöf tells of existential and mental crisis situations and presents the human mind as being comprehensible only beyond the categories of realism. The happy end is produced by humanitarianism, love and the power of art. First, we have Gunnar Hede's violin music which, with the support of Ingrid's love, brings him out of his madness and back into his life and personality: "Och det blev så: för hvarje stycke han spelade, vek det skymmande mörkret en smula" (95) ["And it was like this: for every tune he played, the shadowing darkness disappeared a little bit"].

Secondly, when the Blomgrens and their wretched circus performance reappear at the end of the text, they seem to bring with them the question of the nature and status of art, since: "Cirkus hade förkastat dem, sade herr Blomgren, men inte konsten" (12) ["The circus had rejected them, but not art"]. Although the two old acrobats no longer perform trapeze and tight-rope acts, »De tjänade alttjämt konsten, den var värd, att man var den trogen in i döden. Alltid, alltid konstnärer« (12) ["They were still serving art, it deserved that one was faithful to it until one´s death. Always, always artists"]. The value of art and the status of the Blomgrens as artists are emphatically underlined. Ingrid too, who travels with the small circus at the beginning, is said to possess a certain affinity for an artistic existence because she has such sparkling eyes—»Konstnärsögon« (90) ["artists' eyes"]—even though she lacks any talent as a tight-rope walker or acrobat. Her status is further confirmed by the name Mignon later given to her by Gunnar Hede's mother. This reference to one of literature's most famous circus characters suggests that artistry does not have to involve exceptional acrobatic performances, but rather consists in a mentality, an attitude that ultimately saves Hede. A particularly powerful expression of this message that art is a way of life is provided by the little horse that pulls the Blomgren's wagon: "Hästen var en liten, liten en, som hade brukat dra en karussell och därför aldrig ville gå, om han inte hörde music" (88) ["The horse was a tiny little one, which used to pull a carousel and therefore did not want to go when it didn't hear music"]. For this reason, Mrs. Blomgren always plays on her harmonica when they are on the road and whenever she stops, the horse turns his head around "för att se efter om karussellen hade gått sönder" (89) ["in order to check whether the carousel had broken down"]. Being a circus horse has become his identity—once an artist, always an artist: "De vor konstnärsfolk, eldigt konstnärsfolk, de förstodo vad han menade, när han talade om trohet och kärlek" (14) ["They were artist folks, they understood what he meant when he talked about faithfulness and love"].

In this story, art is thus associated with loyalty, reliability, passion and love; entertainment and commerce, which the Blomgrens once used to stand for, are subordinate to these ideational values; an attitude to life that focuses entirely on making profit is rejected by means of Gunnar Hede's failed business venture. That said, this idealism is complicated by the itinerancy of the circus (cf. Carmeli 1988). The little circus horse thus also arouses sorrow and pity due to the illusion it is

subjected to. It stands likewise for the permanent restlessness of circus life that is fundamentally opposed to Lagerlöf's ideal of a settled existence, as is biographically attested in her losing and regaining her family estate of Mårbacka (Edström 2002, pp. 461–71). The two protagonists of the story, Ingrid and Gunnar, have to be released from this itinerant life and at the end succeed in winning back the estate and their settled lifestyle. Art—Ingrid's "artist's eyes" and Gunnar's violin music—have to become part of everyday life and cannot consist only in itinerancy and illusion-making performances. And as such, the old circus couple has to disappear from the story before its end.

Whereas Lagerlöf's circus can be read as a reflection on the author's own artistic pursuits and the significance of art—the text has been interpreted as an allegory on her own writer's block (Holm 1984)—Bang's self-reflexive move concentrates on the circus's illusionist potential. Hansson's poem, on the other hand, reflects on the inherent intermediality of the circus using onomatopoeia and rhythm. The five very different texts discussed in this paper belong to three different genres and derive quite different aesthetic procedures from the characteristics of the circus: Ibsen's blank expresses the workings of rumors and the attribution of otherness, Jensen's irony mirrors the experience of alterity, Hansson's poetic form acts as an expression of the circus ring and its emotional impact, and Bang's melodramatic quality of the text reflects upon the discourse about energy and vitality. Indirectly, the modern experience of a crisis of language plays into all these texts, since the mediality of the circus, which is expressed almost entirely without language and takes effect physically, spatially, aurally and sensually, acts as a foil the texts can reference in their aesthetics.

In literature, the meta-cultural code of the circus becomes a topos that mirrors the experiences of modernity: the feeling of otherness (in Ibsen and Jensen), the sensation of progress, mobility, speed and technological modernization (Jensen), the ambivalent emotions and anxieties of these changing times (in Hansson and Bang), destabilized gender norms and a new physicality (Bang), and a challenge to the status of art and (newly acquired) mobility (Lagerlöf). The circus produces an expanded awareness of the world (explicitly so in Jensen, but latently in all the texts) and signifies the ambivalent values of modernity, such as risk, mobility, speed and encounters with the other. In Scandinavian literature around 1900, the circus does not represent a carnivalesque or reversed world, but a topos of modernity that can be encountered at the very heart of society. Moreover, it posits a challenge to modern writing and provides a model for modernist aesthetics. By revisiting the transcultural institution of the circus and its reflection in European art and literature, these Scandinavian authors thus make themselves part of the modernist movement.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Article

Urban Space and Gender Performativity in Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* and Cora Sandel's *Alberta and Freedom*

Unni Langås

Department of Nordic and Media Studies, University of Agder, 4604 Kristiansand, Norway; unni.langas@uia.no

Received: 30 September 2018; Accepted: 1 December 2018; Published: 4 December 2018

Abstract: In this article, I discuss the combination of city life and gender performativity in two Norwegian classics, Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* (2016) [*Sult*, 1890] and Cora Sandel's *Alberta and Freedom* (1984) [*Alberte og friheten*, 1931]. These are modernist novels depicting lonely human subjects in an urban space, the first one featuring a man in Kristiania (now Oslo) in the 1880s, the second one a woman and her female acquaintances in Paris in the 1920s. I interpret and compare the two novels by focusing on their intertwined construction of gender performativity and urban space. Gender norms of the city life are critical premises for how the subjects manage to negotiate with different options and obstacles through their modern existences. To both protagonists, inferior femininity is a constant option and threat, but their responses and actions are different. The strategy of the male subject in *Hunger* is to fight his way up from humiliation by humiliating the female other; the strategy of the female subject in *Alberta and Freedom* is instead to seek solidarity with persons who have experiences similar to her own. Hamsun's man and Sandel's woman both perceive their own bodies as crucial to the interpretation of their physical surroundings. However, while the hero in *Hunger* must deal with a body falling apart and a confrontation with the world that depends on a totally fragmented bodily experience, the heroine in *Alberta and Freedom* instead sees herself as a body divided between outer appearance and inner inclinations. Both novels stage a person with writing proclivities in a city setting where the success or failure of artistic work is subjected to the mechanisms of a market economy. Their artistic ambitions are to a large extent decided by their material conditions, which seem to manipulate Hamsun's hero out of the whole business, and Sandel's heroine to stay calm and not give up. Yet the novels share the belief in the body's basis as a denominator for the perception and interpretation of sensual and cognitive impressions of the world.

Keywords: urban space; gender performativity; Hamsun's *Hunger*; Sandel's *Alberta and Freedom*; modern metropolis; streetwalking

1. Introduction

Closely tied to the development of modernist literature is the growing urbanisation and new lifestyles in metropolitan areas. Modernist classics, like James Joyce's *Ulysses* (Joyce [1924] 1972) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (Woolf [1925] 2000), are interpretations of human life in a city characterised by rapid expansion and technological innovations. Commonly, modernist literature is seen as a response to the dual aspects of modernity, exploring on the one hand its promising industrial achievements and on the other its more shadowy effects of alienation and rootlessness. However, as Rita Felski and Deborah L. Parsons, among others, have pointed out, the modern urban space and its modernist representations are not least permeated with gendered and sexualised tensions and

conflicts.[1] While patriarchal patterns of domination prevail and cause difficulties and limitations mostly to women but also to men, modernity implies that new opportunities for a more autonomous life occur—but not seldom at a high cost.

In this essay, I want to discuss the combination of city life and gender performativity in two Norwegian classics, Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* (1890) and Cora Sandel's *Alberta and Freedom* (1931) (Sandel [1963] 1984). These are modernist novels depicting lonely human subjects in an urban space, the first one featuring a man in Kristiania (now Oslo) in the 1880s, the second one a woman and her male and female acquaintances in Paris in the 1920s. By gender performativity I understand a way of constructing gender by means of body, appearance, acts and speech, which can be analysed with combined attention to characters, narrators and rhetoric.[2] My aim is to interpret and compare the two novels by focusing on their intertwined construction of gender performativity and urban space. As I will show, gender norms of the city life are critical premises for how the subjects manage to negotiate with different options and obstacles through their modern existences.

Hunger and *Alberta and Freedom* have both inspired a considerable number of readings. Hamsun's novel has been foregrounded as an innovative text of early European modernism and stands out as a classic reference. Main contributions to the discussion of the novel's position as an important breakthrough of modernism are the works by Peter Kirkegaard (1975) and Martin Humpál (1998). They both foreground the novel's protagonist as a lonely, rootless subject in urban life as well as its experimental narrative form. However, while Kirkegaard adopts an ideologically focused approach, Humpál emphasises the novel's narrative techniques.

The novel has, moreover, been repeatedly discussed in the wake of what Hamsun himself saw as a contribution to a new psychological literature. In a manifest-like essay from 1890, "From the Unconscious Life of the Human Mind" (Hamsun 1994b) ["Fra det ubevidste sjæleliv", (Hamsun 1994a)], Hamsun argues in favour of a psychological literature concerned with mental life, as well as with the relationship between creativity and the unconscious. This intentional focus on hidden impulses and drives has inspired psychoanalytical readings, most prominently by Atle Kittang, who in a major study (1984) and other essays underscores the connection between Hamsun's modernity and his psychological writings: "Here, in this astonishing correspondence between the novelist's investigations into the deep conflicts of subjective and inter-subjective existence, and the future revolutions in psychology, lies perhaps the real modernity of Hamsun's early (and even later) works".[3]

Contrary to this psychological approach, other examinations have instead pointed out how the novel focuses on the subject's projections and observations of external phenomena. Within this way of reading, *Hunger* has been interpreted as an anti-psychological text, for instance by Knut Brynhildsvoll (1998). Its body focus has, furthermore, been underscored by Per Mæleng (1994), who reads the hero's neurosis as bulimia and discloses a textual structure that mirrors the bulimic's rhythm of eating and vomiting. In an extended analysis of its body phenomenology, Hamsun's depiction of the protagonist's gendered and sexualised behaviour has been discussed by Langås (2004).

Cora Sandel's trilogy on Alberta—*Alberta and Jacob* [*Alberte og Jakob*, (Sandel 1926)], *Alberta and Freedom* [*Alberte og friheten*, (Sandel [1931] 1976)], *Alberta Alone* [*Bare Alberte*, (Sandel 1939)]—has attracted several academic readings. Most relevant to mention here are interpretations of the walking and city motif in *Alberta and Freedom*, which portrays the female protagonist and her life in Paris. In her book on "literary vagabonds" [litterære vaganter], Selboe (2003) explores texts by female authors, who place their heroines strolling around in the metropolis, while being visible and invisible at the

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1 *The Gender of Modernity* (Felski 1995); *Streetwalking the Metropolis* (Parsons 2000) .

2 The concept of 'gender performativity' is developed in several works by Judith Butler, see *Gender Trouble* (Butler [1990] 1999), and *Bodies that Matter* (Butler 1993). Butler's perspective is to theorise about gender in a general sense, while my approach is concerned with the way in which literary texts take part in the cultural construction of gender.

3 Knut Hamsun's *Sult* (Hamsun 1890, p. 301) .

same time.[4] Her aim in the Sandel chapter is to show how the city surroundings are integrated motifs in a story of artistic creativity, and also how Alberta's walking is a physical activity that echoes her childhood in a small town in northern Norway. Sensing and perceiving the streets of Paris, night and day, means to create a literary place by means of combined impulses from the memorised past and the experienced present.

In addition, Arne Melberg foregrounds Alberta's walking in his book on traveling and writing (2005). He sees the restless and aimless way of moving around in the city landscape as an essential part of the novel's modernism and observes how its female protagonist, in contrast to her male acquaintances, has no plans and no projects. Curiously, the walking activity is a kind of passivity, he maintains, since it takes part in an existential being-in-the-world which has no declared goal. However, precisely in the tension between dynamism and pause, Melberg finds the poetic imagery that allows Sandel's text to prefigure its important creative writing theme. Paulson (2005) adopts a phenomenological approach to the representation of the city and underscores the image of Paris in Alberta's perception as a magic place.

More concerned with the vulnerable body, Rees (2010) takes the penetration motif as a guiding perspective throughout her analysis of the novel. Literally and metaphorically, the penetration takes place in different ways, she argues, and sorts out its strata in 'architectural penetration', 'artistic penetration', 'sexual penetration', and 'narrative penetration'. The first includes the many scenes where Alberta, but also other women, stay in rooms with a penetrable quality "that relates to the marginalized and transitory status of the people who occupy them".[5] The second includes several passages where the border between text and image is blurred, predominantly in ekphrasis. These descriptions often tend to function as projections of the gendered conflicts at the novel's discourse level. The third includes sexual relationships, depicted primarily by means of rhetorical substitutions and the gaze, but not least the more explicitly told abortion story of Liesel, Alberta's closest friend. The fourth includes narrative interruptions by memories that subvert epic chronology and permit spatial readings, most notably the novel's most extended flashback, which depicts the death of Alberta's parents.

My comparative reading of the two novels will focus on the gendered identities and relations as they are shaped in a setting of modern urban space and produced by cultural norms. Both novels feature a lonely person without strong social ties, but their different sex causes them to face diverse and, to an extent, opposite challenges. I will show how the two protagonists respond to this situation, and how the modern urban space from this point of view becomes a tempered battleground for gendered controversies.

2. Masculine Negotiations

Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* is generally recognised as the first modernist novel in Norway. In my perspective, it is a text that foregrounds the performativity of a male body and its negotiations with masculine conventions, economic resources and femininity. Hamsun stages a character who experiences an extreme situation of loss, and he constructs a psychological case largely with bodily signs and interior monologue. An important part of this aesthetics, where the point of view is that of the first-person narrator, is the way he interprets the city and its inhabitants by means of physical perceptions, which are governed by his existential state of being hungry. The main character's senses, thoughts and interaction with the surroundings are basically guided by the hungry body, and as a reflection, the outer world leaves its prints on him. The novel's physiological frame is emphasised by the phrase that introduces "Kristiania, that strange city which no one leaves before it has set its marks upon him . . . " (3) [Kristiania, denne forunderlige By, som ingen forlader før han har faaet Mærker af

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[4] Selboe's study includes texts by Camilla Collett, Sigrid Undset, Cora Sandel, Jean Rhys, Djuna Barnes, and Virginia Woolf.
[5] *Figurative Space* (Rees 2010, p. 89).

den . . . (1)], as well as the final description of the man as being "wet with fever and fatigue" (p. 217) ["vaad af Feber og Mathed" (p. 333)].[6]

A central motif in the novel, which does not have much of a plot, is an encounter with a woman he names Ylajali. Their first meeting takes place when he approaches two women at Palace Hill and describes one of them with words that reveal an erotic tension that increases the I's nervousness and alienation:

> "As I walked by, I brushed the sleeve of one of them; I looked up—she had a full, somewhat pale face. Suddenly she blushes and becomes wonderfully beautiful, I don't know why, maybe from a word she'd heard spoken by a passer-by, maybe only because of some silent thought of her own. Or could it be because I had touched her arm? Her high bosom heaves visibly several times, and she presses her hand firmly around the handle of her parasol. What was the matter with her?" (p. 12)
>
> [Idet jeg passered dem, strejfed jeg den enes Ærme, jeg saa op, hun havde et fyldigt, lidt blegt Ansigt. Med ét blusser hun og blir forunderlig skøn, jeg ved ikke hvorfor, maaske af et Ord, hun hører af en forbigaaende, maaske blot af en stille Tanke hos hende selv. Eller skulde det være fordi jeg berørte hendes Arm? Det høje Bryst bølger heftigt nogle Gange, og hun klemmer Haanden haardt om Parasolskaftet. Hvad gik der af hende? (pp. 15–16)]

The woman is represented through selected body parts, which underscores how the man sees her. The "full" face is, in the context of hunger, a sign of wealth and sufficient nourishment, and paleness is, in the 19th century, a colour of fashion. Her "high bosom" and the word "blushes" more than suggest erotic longing and willingness. In addition, her hand, that presses "firmly around the handle of her parasol", is a detail that, in this context, has sexual connotations. The passage discloses a connection between the way he looks at her and the interpretations he plays with, namely that he is the one who makes the lady vibrate. But to the reader, it is his own desire that is exposed in this way.

However, the encounter takes a surprising turn: "I'm seized by a strange desire to frighten this lady, to follow her and hurt her in some way. I overtake once more and walk past her, then abruptly turn around and meet her face to face to observe her" (pp. 12–13) [. . . jeg føler mig greben af en sælsom Lyst til at gøre denne Dame bange, følge efter hende og fortrædige hende paa en eller anden Maade (p. 16)]. He tells the lady several times that she has lost her book, although she does not have one, and annoys her by coughing and making the "stupidest faces" (p. 13) [dummeste Grimaser (p. 16)] behind her back. He loses control of himself and cannot identify with the one who behaves like this. Since the point of view is that of the male character, he has no access to the lady's mind, and instead interprets her thoughts based on bodily signs, primarily her eyes. In them, he reads confusion, fear, curiousness, but also an erotic interest, and he shadows the two women until they arrive at their home at St. Olav's Place. She watches him through the window, and leaving the scene, he continually senses her pursuing eyes in his neck, and a cold shiver runs down his back.

The sexual motif in *Hunger* is characterised by the same humiliating deficiency as everything else in the man's life, and like the lack of food and money, the lack of sex is exposed in ironic and partly grotesque situations. The erotic scenes in the novel serve throughout as a reminder of his exclusion from this part of life also, and at the same time, they underscore the novel's bodily aesthetics. He may take part in sexual activities but is also regularly an outsider where he compulsorily obtains a voyeuristic position. The picture of gender relations and sexual forms that is drawn in the novel shows a world that has very little to do with official bourgeois practices. Familial frames around sexuality are abandoned, and instead, sexual life unfolds outside of the homes or as a grotesque inversion of conventional notions.

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[6] I quote from Knut Hamsun: *Hunger* (Hamsun 2016), and its first edition, *Sult* (Hamsun 1890).

The reader gets access to some of the I-person's erotic fantasies, which seem to be shaped by romantic idealisations of women. The contrast to his real experiences is stark and points to the ironic pattern into which even the sexual motif is inscribed. His first fantasy of a woman occurs in the conversation with an old, blind man. It presents itself as an invented story, but the woman is called Ylajali and is the daughter of a man called Happolati, who lives at 2 St. Olav's Place. Happolati is a cabinet minister in Persia and his daughter a fairy princess who lies on a bed of yellow roses and owns three hundred women slaves. Very conscious of his own invention of "desperate lies" (p. 26) [desperate Løgne (p. 37)], the I-person describes the woman like this: "Eyes like raw silk, arms of amber! A single glance from her was as seductive as a kiss, and when she called me, her voice went straight to my heart, like a jet of wine" (pp. 26–27) [Øjne som Raasilke, Arme af Rav! Bare et enkelt Blik af hende var forførende som et Kys, og naar hun kaldte paa mig, jog hendes Stemme mig som en Straale af Vin lige ind i min Sjæls Fosfor (p. 38)]. The contrast between this ideal of a woman and an ordinary version of the second sex is articulated as a critique of the old man's reluctance to let himself be persuaded by the story. However at the same time, it is obvious that the I-person himself does not believe in his own account.

The real Ylajali does in fact come to him, and the pattern is repeated. Three evenings he has observed her outside the gate of his lodgings, and even though she is very well veiled, her attributes disclose her identity. She is wearing black, has a veil over her face and bosom and has a parasol with an ebony ring on the handle. His reaction is tense and typically depicted as a physical response: "My nervous brain shot out its feelers" (p. 113) [Min nervøse Hjærne skød Følehorn ud (p. 167)]. When he does not dare to approach her or offer to accompany her back home, it is because he intuitively thinks something will be required, a glass of wine or a ride. In addition, he is hungry, and although he had food just one day ago, he is not as capable of being hungry as before. The woman's expectations, in other words, force him to direct the claims of desire as well into an economic structure. When he uses the lack of money and his hunger as an excuse to keep the woman at a distance, it may seem as if there are other, less explicit, motifs behind his hesitancy. Hence, his sexuality is intimately tied to economy and power, but the relation is complex and far from transparent.

This point is further developed when the I-person, after an unsuccessful excursion around the city to find food and money, ends up at Karl Johan Street around eleven pm and encounters the sex market in full bloom: "Rustling skirts, a few bursts of sensual laughter, heaving breasts, excited, panting breaths; far down, by the Grand Hotel, a voice calling, 'Emma!'. The entire street was a swamp, with hot vapours rising from it" (p. 115) [Raslende Pigeskørter, en og anden kort, sandselig Latter, bølgende Bryster, heftige, pæsende Aandedrag; langt nede ved Grand en Stemme, som raaber: 'Emma!' Hele Gaden var en Sump, hvorfra hede Dunster steg op (p. 171)]. This impressionistic description of the sex industry is inscribed with feminine and animal characteristics, but our man does not have the means to participate:

> "I instinctively search my pockets for two kroner. The passion quivering in every movement of the passers-by, the dim light of the street lamps, the tranquil, pregnant night—it was all beginning to affect me: this air filled with whispers, embraces, trembling confessions, half-spoken words, little squeals. Some cats are making love amid loud shrieks in Blomquist's entranceway. And I didn't have two kroner. It was a torment, a misery like no other, to be so impoverished. What humiliation, what disgrace!" (p. 115).
>
> [Jeg forfarer uvilkaarlig mine Lommer efter to Kroner. Den Lidenskab, der dirrer i hver af de Forbigaaendes Bevægelser, selve Gaslygternes dunkle Lys, den stille, svangre Nat, altsammen har begyndt at angribe mig, denne Luft, der er fyldt af Hvisken, Omfavnelser, skælvende Tilstaaelser, halvt udtalte Ord, smaa Hvin; endel Katte elsker med høje Skrig inde i Blomqvists Port. Og jeg havde ikke to Kroner. Det var en Jammer, en Elendighed uden Lige at være saa udarmet! Hvilken Ydmygelse, hvilken Vanære! (p. 171).]

He is denied the pleasure because he is poor and cannot compete with the bankers and grocers, onto whom he instead pours out his contempt. Arrogance replaces negotiations, and this attitude also influences the conversation with one of the women who catches his attention with her gaze. The conversation with her discloses the ambiguous attitude of both towards the game in which they are taking part, and whose rules they both quickly break. He plays the patron, aware of the fact that he does not have a dime to invest in the service offered but is taken by surprise when she wants to come with him for free. Humiliated by this generous proposal from a poor hooker, he says no thanks. While he has earlier regretted his lack of money to buy a sexual service, he now finds an excuse to escape. While he earlier let himself be overwhelmed by the passions of the erotic scene on the city street, his desires have now disappeared. To rescue himself from this embarrassing situation with a small amount of honour, he presents himself as a clergyman and recommends that the girl walk away and sin no more. We are here witnessing a play in three acts in which our hero approaches the sex market firstly as a customer, but with a clear conscience of not being serious because of his lack of money, secondly as fatherly caretaker for the poor girl who must sell her body to anyone, and thirdly as a Christian pastor with moralising accusations against a sinner in the flesh.

In all the roles, he plays with existing conventions but does not fit into any of them. He is an outsider in relation to existing role models in the culture and is instead ready to exploit them to his own favour and satisfaction. Moreover, these roles are infected by money and the power of market mechanisms. The law of the market decides who has and who does not have the necessary resources to be active agents, and on these terms, Hamsun's man is unable to compete. As soon as this law is redefined and other criteria rule, he can play the game, but is then suddenly uninterested in the whole business. Both Ylajali and the unknown young prostitute seem to appreciate qualities in the I-person other than his economy and status, but it is exactly this material aspect that he himself foregrounds in his relationship with them. It can, in other words, be tempting to interpret the I-person's relations to women and sex psychologically, as fear, reluctance, impotence, etc., but his own understanding emphasises that his problems are due to the lack of material resources.

The next day he observes the black veiled lady again by the gas lamp outside his gate, and this time he initiates a conversation, probably more self-confident because he has some money in his pocket. She agrees to letting him bring her home, and during this walk, occupies his senses in a way that hardly describes her but instead the qualities that stimulate his desire:

> "We started off; she walked on my right-hand side. A peculiar, lovely feeling took hold on me. The consciousness of being in the presence of a young girl. I didn't take my eyes off her through our walk. The perfume in her hair, the warmth radiating from her body, this fragrance of woman that surrounded her, that sweet breath every time she turned her face towards me—all this streamed in upon me, penetrating irresistibly all my senses. I could just barely make out a full, somewhat pale face behind her veil and a high bosom that strained against her coat. The thought of all this hidden loveliness, whose presence I sensed under her coat and behind her veil, was bewildering to me and made me idiotically happy without any sensible reason. I couldn't hold back any longer and touched her with my hand, fingering her shoulder and smiling daftly. I could hear my heart pounding" (p. 128).
>
> [Vi satte os i Bevægelse; hun gik paa min højre Side. En ejendommelig, skøn Følelse greb mig, Bevidstheden om at være i en ung Piges Nærhed. Jeg gik og saa paa hende hele Vejen. Parfumen i hendes Haar, Varmen, der stod ud fra hendes Legeme, denne Duft af Kvinde, der fulgte hende, det søde Aandedrag hver Gang, hun vendte Ansigtet mod mig,—altsammen strømmed ind paa mig, trængte mig uregerligt ind i alle mine Sandser. Jeg kunde saavidt skimte et fyldigt, lidt blegt Ansigt bag Sløret og et højt Bryst, der strutted ud mod Kaaben. Tanken paa al denne skjulte Herlighed, som jeg aned var tilstede indenfor Kaaben og Sløret, forvirred mig, gjorde mig idiotisk lykkelig, uden nogen rimelig Grund; jeg holdt det ikke længer ud, jeg berørte hende med min Haand, fingred ved hendes Skulder og smilte fjollet. Jeg hørte mit Hjærte slaa (pp. 192–93).]

The erotic tension between Ylajali and the I-person started with a dynamic of gazes in their first encounter and continues here with a conversation that typically reveals him as unpredictable and emotionally unbalanced. However, it is also more successful since the meeting ends with a kiss. In this scene, the mechanisms of power are intimately tied to the choreography of undressing that often dramatises an erotic game. She is wearing a black veil that covers her face and bosom, while he is eager to discover what it hides. He asks her twice to take it off, while she uses it as a means of negotiation, firstly to tickle his senses, and secondly to accept his plea:

> "Suddenly she made a resolute movement and pulled her veil up over her forehead. We stood looking at each other for a second. 'Ylajali!' I said. She rose on her toes, flung her arms around my neck and kissed me right on the lips. I could feel her bosom heaving, hear her rapid breath" (p. 135).
>
> [Pludselig gjorde hun en resolut Bevægelse og trak Sløret op i Panden; vi stod og saa paa hinanden et Sekund. Ylajali! sagde jeg. Hun hæved sig op, slog Armene om min Hals og kyssed mig midt paa Munden. En eneste Gang, hurtigt, forvirrende hurtigt, midt paa Munden. Jeg følte, hvor hendes Bryst bølged, hun pusted voldsomt (pp. 202–3)].

The gaze, the voice and the bodily touch represent in condensed form the stepwise scenography of perception that characterises their relationship.

At the same time as the contest of Ylajali's body goes on and is played out as a fight about the veil, the I-person's body appears—in an interesting inversion of the conventional gender roles in this ritual—as increasingly naked. Instead of the female striptease dancer who throws away her clothes one by one, the male character's sparse and untidy wardrobe is disclosed. It starts, not very "dangerously", with his observation of a passing man who carries a pair of shoes under his arm, as if he wants to spare them from being worn out. Then Ylajali asks him if he is cold without an overcoat, to which he answers "No, not at all" (p. 130) ["aldeles ikke" (p. 195)], since a confirmation would reveal his sorry condition. His shabby clothing signifies his economic situation, which is intricately embedded in a complex relation to the erotic negotiations that go on between the two. In his thoughts, the bad wear causes trouble in his relationship with the woman, and he seemingly does not understand why she wants to have anything to do with him at all. This theory of his explains why he offends her again, as if he will push her away: "You shouldn't really be walking here with me, miss; I compromise you in the eyes of everybody by my clothes alone" (p. 132) ['De burde i Grunden ikke gaa sammen med mig, Frøken; jeg prostituerer Dem midt for alle Folks Øjne bare ved min Dragt' (p. 197)]. Again, according to the reversed gender conventions, she shakes the humiliation away and sticks with the man.

In this scene with Ylajali, the erotic issue is complicated by the I-person's tendency to ascribe great significative dominance to clothing, both in his thoughts and in his conversation with her. The clothes obviously signify his economic shortage, but they also belong to the cultural context that attributes certain values of appearance in the interaction between the genders. Hat, overcoat and waistcoat are clothes without which the man clearly feels naked, and the lack of these items makes him subordinate and weak in his own eyes. His irrational and offensive statements are connected to this gender norm in the text, and when the rendezvous all in all turns out rather successful, it is due to her. She, on her part, lets herself be represented by a veil that she uses as an entrance to the body that he desires and to which she regulates access.

The epiphany of the erotic storyline is the scene where he is invited into Ylajali's apartment and sexual pleasure is within reach. In this case also, body and clothing mark the profound asymmetry between them and underscore the male's weakened masculinity in the erotic game: "Oh, that wretched suit I was wearing!" (p. 158) ['Aa, det elendige Antræk, jeg havde paa!' (p. 241)]. His desire is expressed in bodily reactions: "I sat looking at her with rapt attention. My heart was thumping, the blood coursing warmly through my veins" (p. 160) [Jeg sad fortabt og saa paa hende. Mit Hjærte slog højt, Blodet spændte mig varmt gennem Aarene (pp. 243–44)]. With a sore foot, however, he is physically handicapped and unable to play the cat-and-mouse game around the table to which she

invites him. His attitude is deeply ambivalent the whole time and is expressed in a recurrent double communication. He has shaved his beard but is stumbling in his chase after her; he manoeuvres her down on the sofa and gets to see her breast but has a lot of loose hair on his shoulders. He confesses his emotions and verbalises his desire but also tells her about his poverty and his humiliations. The scene closes with her embracing him and offering a love that he is unable to receive. "She offered me her mouth but I couldn't believe her, it was bound to be a sacrifice on her part, a means of getting it over with" (p. 170). [Hun rakte sin Mund frem; jeg kunde ikke tro hende, det var ganske bestemt et Offer, hun bragte, et Middel til at faa en Ende paa det (p. 261)]. He rushes to the door and walks out backwards—a final sign of his ambivalence, disgrace and fiasco as a seducer.

As a grotesque replica of this unsuccessful event, the man is invited by his landlord in Vaterland to witness an act of intercourse between the landlady and a sailor.[7] While the two men are peeping through the hole, the husband is almost entirely occupied with the old man on the couch beside, who is involuntarily forced to observe the sexual act: "'Just look!' he said, laughing with quiet, excited laughter. 'Take a peep! Hee-hee! There they lie. Look at the old man! Can you see the old man?'" (p. 202) ['Se her!' sagde han og lo med en stille, hidsig Latter. 'Kig ind! Hi-hi! Der ligger de! Se paa Gammeln! Kan De se Gammeln?' (p. 308)]. He repeats his utterance after the I-person has peeped through the hole: "'Did you see the old man?' he whispered. 'Oh Lord, did you see the old man?'" (p. 202) ['Saa De Gammeln?' hvisked han. 'Aa, Gud, saa De Gammeln?' (p. 309)]. With this explicit reference to the lame old man's voyeuristic position, the two of them, the I-person and the old man, reflect each other. Earlier, the old man's situation has been like the I-person's since they have both been bullied by family members. The children, two girls, have been jumping up and down on the old man's body, sticking straws into his ears and stabbing at his eyes and nostrils without him being able to defend himself, except to spit on them.

This scene reflects the I-person's total humiliation as a sexually active man.[8] He has been thrown out of his bed and his room, while the sailor has moved in, and is left with an outsider position. This status is prefigured in the scene in Ylajali's home, as well as in a situation on the street where he sees her for the last time. Here, she is synecdochically named a "red dress" (p. 189) [en rød Kjole (pp. 288–89)] and even a "blood-red dress" (p. 191) [en blodrød Kjole (p. 291)] several times and is accompanied by the "Duke" ['Hertugen' (p. 290)]. Our man's response to this defeat is expressed as selective perceptions and judgements of the quality of this colour, and the fate of being knocked out by this other man turns into a verdict of Ylajali's appearance: "I no longer cared for her, not at all; she wasn't the least attractive any more, she had lost her good looks—bloody hell, how she had faded!" (p. 191) [Jeg brød mig ikke længer om hende, aldeles ikke; hun var ikke det allerringeste vakker mer, hun havde tabt sig, fy Fan, hvor hun var falmet! (p. 291)]. In contrast to Ylajali's red, the landlady's body is white, "her legs gleamed white against the dark quilt" (p. 202) [hendes Ben skinned hvide mod den mørke Dyne (pp. 308–9)]. With the added description that she also always appears as pregnant, it is clear that the women in these scenes, where the I-person's sexuality is a theme, are represented as one body part, one attire or one colour. This synecdochic rhetoric can be read as a sign of the I-person's own exalted condition and is an expressionist way of writing that condenses the power of emotion in one single sign.

The connection between sexuality and money in the novel is underscored to the bitter end and it transmits the gender relations from the sphere of intimacy on to the market. When the I-person receives ten crowns from an unknown donor, he throws the crumpled note in the face of his landlady.

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[7] This scene has been left out in George Egerton's translation, which is accessible online on Project Gutenberg (released 2005).

[8] In Per Stounbjerg's reading, this scene shows how female sexuality works as a symbol of the border-transgressing modernity: "The scene is presented for the male gaze, and it is written and staged from a male's perspective, Hamsun's. The female culture is a product of the male gaze. If we look behind the key hole, behind the city's shiny façade, the terrible appears" [Scenen præsenteres for mænds blikke, og den er skrevet, iscenesat ud fra en mands optic, Hamsuns. Den kvindagtige kultur er produkt af et mandligt blik. Kigger man ind gennem nøglehullet, ind bag byens skinnende facade, begynder det skrækkelige] ((Stounbjerg [1985] 1990) "Modernitetens køn", p. 84, my translation).

However, when he realises that it comes from Ylajali, he grows "[s]ick with pain and shame" (p. 208) [syg af Smærte og Skam (p. 318)]. Instead of digging her into the mud, as he earlier wished to do, he now wishes that he himself would sink: "I was sinking, sinking everywhere I turned, sinking to my knees, to my middle, going down in infamy never to come up again, never!" (p. 208) [. . . jeg sank, sank paa alle Kanter, hvor jeg vendte mig hen, sank tilknæs, sank til livs, dukket mig under i Vanære og kom aldrig op igen, aldrig! (p. 318)]. The erotic pleasure and humiliation are fundamentally tied up with economy, and success or fiasco on the sex market is consequently related to material resources. Our male character does not miss access to women and sex. On the contrary, the portrayed women, both the prostitute and Ylajali, are astonishingly willing despite his continuous performance as a shameful, poor, and unsympathetic person.

3. Feminine Negotiations

Alberta and Freedom is the second volume of a trilogy.[9] Told in a third person narrative and consistently from the point of view of the main character, it features Alberta, who tries to make a living in Paris in the 1920s and is at the centre of a vivid character gallery not least populated by other women. They have common intimate experiences and similar problems but are also foreign and distanced from each other. Encounters take place in outdoor places, in cafés, at market places, on streets, while glimpses of indoor life are rare but significant.

The opening scene describes Alberta as a nude model at work for the dilettante painter Mr. Digby. She lets her clothes fall in front of him and does not first and foremost feel embarrassed but rather fears that something could come too close and hurt her. She enters the podium with a dizzy feeling and compares it to throwing herself into the sea, but then pulls herself together and concentrates on standing in the right position. The scene is an exemplary introduction to Alberta's life, which is a permanent condition of being exposed to other people's gaze and judgements, to loneliness and poverty, and to unfulfilled dreams. Her strong sense of being captured in an inert existence without outlined plans or a drive for action is a main component of this state of living. Significantly, the initial scene also introduces artisan life and its gender aspects as the context of the narrative, as well as the economic motivation behind the engagement as a nude model. The job means necessary income and is free of risk but must nevertheless be hidden.

This opening sequence puts the fragile female body in the foreground of the story and constitutes an interpretation of a life. The naked body that "stands", exposed to other people's gaze and objectified in the process of artistic representation, functions both as a realistic description and as a metaphor for fear and vulnerability.[10] Living on the edge of decency, on a precarious minimum for existence, and barricading herself behind solid mental walls of defence, are recurring themes in Alberta's self-understanding. The undressing takes place in an area of the city far from the people she knows and frequents daily, but even so, she is not completely safe. Sometimes, elderly and "exceedingly respectable" (p. 7) [særdeles respectable (p. 9)] men occur, present themselves as "'admirers of Mr. Digby's art'" (p. 7) ['beundrere av mr. Digbys kunst' (p. 9)] and have no business there other than to look. In a subtle and ironic manner, the text communicates the current norm, which stipulates that the respectable position is to look and not be looked at, and that this respectable side is masculine and the opposite one feminine.

The border between a model and a prostitute could be blurred because many women were both, or they were the artist's model as well as his mistress.[11] The outworn question "Tu viens?" is a recurrent

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[9] Sandel, *Alberta and Jacob* (Sandel 1926), *Alberta and Freedom* (Sandel [1931] 1976), and *Alberta Alone* (Sandel 1939). I quote from (Sandel [1931] 1976).

[10] The penetration metaphor that Ellen Rees uses this scene to introduce is, in my opinion, well underpinned in her reading: "It seems to me that this fear might best be expressed as a fear of penetration, understood on various metaphorical and literal levels, and that this is a recurring motif and as such a major element of the text" (Rees 2010) *Figurative Space*, p. 75.

[11] *Streetwalking the Metropolis* (Parsons 2000).

invitation that echoes around Alberta when she walks in the streets, reminding her indiscreetly of her risky position in the gendered sign system of the city. Ironically, both Alberta and her friend Liesel end up working as nude models for their artist lovers, Sivert and Eliel, but for free. The model job is only a way of earning money, but the situation changes as soon as the artist and the lover are the same person. Liesel's destiny prefigures Alberta's, and an important component in this process is the offered or compulsory role at hand, namely as a mix of sexual and artistic objects. This process, which generally means that the woman must give up her own artistic ambitions, is meticulously described in Sandel's narrative and represents an important dimension of its gender critical perspective.

Liesel is a painter, but she experiences what we are told to understand as a typical female career. She sits model for the Swedish sculptor Eliel, makes him coffee, sews the buttons on his shirt. In Sandel's subtle rhetoric, it becomes clear that one thing leads to another: "'I pose for the head', said Liesel. 'For the head, Albertchen'. 'I know—and for a hand, and for a shoulder. If it goes on like this . . . '" (p. 16) ['Jeg sitter for hodet, sier Liesel: For hodet, Albertchen—Ja—og for en hånd, for en skulder. Skal det fortsette slik———' (p. 15)]. And that is exactly how it goes on, because one day, when Eliel's model does not show up, she takes off her clothes, and ultimately, she is not only a model but a mistress, implying that her own painting ambitions must be set aside.

Later in the novel, Alberta stays in Eliel's atelier while he and Liesel visit the countryside. Now she is a guest and an observer in the artist's room, not a model, and she wonders about Liesel's situation in this interior where the plaster figures vainly try to "lift their heavy limbs towards each other" (p. 90) [løfte de tunge lemmene sine mot hverandre (p. 74)]. The sculptures throw a confirming reflection back on the analysis that Alberta makes about her friends and their relationship to each other, and the sculptor's atelier becomes a sinister imprint of a disturbing relationship. Eliel's portrait of Liesel obtains a central space that is both material and metaphoric in this landscape of figures. On the one hand, it is his first work of marble, an expensive material. On the other, there is a "brass instrument of torture" (p. 90) [torturredskap av messing (p. 75)] penetrating it, and Alberta cannot but think of Liesel when she notices how the brass "had bored a sharp hook right into one nipple, which was almost loosened from the block, and another hook into the navel" (p. 90) [har boret en hvass tagg rett inn i en brystvorte, som så vidt er frigjort fra blokken, en annen tagg i en navles runding (p. 75)]. This metaphoric connection between the unfinished marble sculpture with brass tags and Liesel's body points mercilessly at her subjected position in the relationship with the artist and forecasts her later devastating abortion.[12]

The women in Sandel's novel are artists, but precisely also women. In the depiction of the artist women's lives in the metropolis, the author emphasises how their art is inextricably connected with their gender. That is, most of the women are not only autonomous artists, but also models and mistresses to male artists, and thus, objects in these male artists' aesthetic representations. The artist women's lives are characterised by a daily fight for survival on a minimum income, and their sense of happiness or unhappiness is decided more by their intimate relationships than by their art.

The female minor figures make up an international collage around the main character's life. Early in the novel, these women, both French and foreign, are described by some common traits. Alberta conceives them as a "series of elderly women perpetually trudging round Montparnasse" (p. 19) [en rekke halvgamle kvinner, som trasker om på Montparnasse (p. 18)]. They have wrinkles and grey hair, and they "dragged themselves round with large bags full of brushes over one arm, their camp stool and easel under it, a wet canvas in each hand and their skirts trailing behind them" (p. 19) [drasser rundt med store penselposer på armen, feltstol og staffeli under den, et vått lerret på blindramme i hver hånd og skjørtene slepende efter seg (p. 18)]. They paint in a similar way and frighten Alberta by the thought of having to walk around in the city, year in, year out, as an old, ugly dilettante. The

[12] Liesel's abortion is a main theme in the novel, but I will not go further into that here. Cf. (Langås 2014).

individual characters that appear among them, as impressionistic spots on a faint background, are Wolochinska, Potter, Alphonsine, Marushka, and Liesel.

The lonely Polish Wolochinska lives in the same hotel as Alberta, in one of the better rooms towards the street. On two occasions we get an impression of her circumstances. On the first occasion, Wolochinska asks Alberta into her room for a cigarette, invites her out for dinner, and asks for an opinion on a painting, a cubist study. Behind the pale, bright, somewhat stiff woman in the door opening, Alberta observes a room with a controlled, pink light, decorated with things of which she cannot even afford to think. Perplexed, Alberta attempts to say something about the picture, but it is as if the painting and the woman are mixed in one and the same perception: "The daylight fell palely on the thick layers of color and on her own angular features under the smooth, close-cropped, very fair hair" (p. 24) [Dagskjæret slår blakt mot billedets tykke lag av farve og mot hennes egne, kantete trekk under glatt, kortklipt, meget lyst hår (p. 22)]. Despite her own loneliness, Alberta says no thanks to entering and hurries away. Later, it becomes clear that her reluctance is due to Wolochinska's being a lesbian.

The second time, the invitation becomes more explicit and erotically distinct. It is summer, and, like many other Parisians, Wolochinska is going to the countryside. When Alberta passes by, Wolochinska suddenly appears in the doorway wearing a kimono and invites her for a cold drink. Her friendliness is a gesture that Alberta neither understands nor returns, and she is afflicted by a bad conscience and an instinctive uneasiness towards this woman whom she repeatedly tries to avoid. This time, the invitation is more wide-ranging, since she asks her to come with her to the countryside, but Alberta feels uncomfortable in the company of this woman who manages to give her a kiss on the mouth. Confused and self-critical, Alberta withdraws to her room.

Potter is the American woman who first and foremost represents the old women that are trudging around the city with their easels. Among the friends that are gathered in Marushka's room, she appears as a still life with eyes that are "screwed up into slits in her tired, ageing face" (p. 46) [knepet sammen til streker i det trette, aldrende ansiktet (p. 40)]. Potter utters brutal and disgusting things about men's relationships with women, things that, after all, appear in proportion. Her bitter words are effective, probably because they are uttered against the background of bitter experiences. Alberta freezes when she listens to Potter even though the American lady is friendly enough. "Men are like hungry dogs, I always told you— – —", she says in her mother tongue, and continues in French: "It is a woman's misfortune to think with her heart. Man thinks with something a little lower down" (p. 48) [Det er kvinnens ulykke at hun tenker med hjertet. Mannen, han tenker med noe som sitter lavere—(p. 41)]. This statement causes disturbance around the table but, seen together with Liesel's destiny, it achieves an ominous truth value.

The French model Alphonsine is the stable and motherly person who always supports Alberta and helps her get the job with Mr. Digby. While Potter recommends that Alberta work and not let the men obstruct her, Alphonsine advises her to find herself a man, "Il vous manque une affection mademoiselle— – —" (p. 72). However, Alphonsine is also critical, and she warns Alberta against Sivert, in the same way as she warns Liesel against Eliel. All in all, she is, with her advice woman to woman, quite ambiguous, since she prophesies on the one hand a life of happiness if she finds a man, and on the other hand, teaches her that men are trustless and egocentric. Alphonsine's look is characteristically described as if it were a painting:

> "Above her short, broad face, in which the skin and muscles were stretched spare and taut across the cheek-bones, red hair jutted out in a thick wave and was gathered up diagonally on top of her head in an oblong roll. A painted mouth and two large irises, green as a cat's, stood out in violent contrast to her powder-white skin. Beneath her eyes it looked as if brownish blue shadow was eating in deep. It gave her a ravaged, battered, almost defaced look. She smiled with large, strong teeth" (p. 51).
>
> [Over det korte, brede ansiktet, hvor hud og muskler sitter knapt og spent over kinnbenene, ligger rødt hår frem i en tykk bølge og samles oppe på hodet i en avlang rull på tvers. En

> malt munn og to store, kattegrønne iris står brutalt mot den pudderbleke huden. Under øynene er det som om brunblå skygge åt seg i dybden. Det gir henne noe herjet og medtatt, nesten beskadiget. Hun smiler med store, sterke tenner (p. 44)].

Marushka is a Russian artist who "glided from one affair to another incredibly easily" (p. 72) [ufattelig lett og sorgløst glir fra det ene til det andre (p. 60)]. She is an expert in both art and men, and her advice to Alberta deals with both. She has also observed the qualities of Liesel's work and is critical to her studies at Colarossi, which in Marushka's eyes is a dilettante art school. In Sandel's portrait, Marushka is a woman who utilises the advantages of her gender, not least as they are depicted in the colourful scene where Alberta, in an emergency, comes to ask her for a small loan. The scene delicately suggests that Marushka is not only an artist, but also does a little business on the side—with her body.

Marushka has installed herself in an erotic scenography because she expects a man, and it becomes clear to Alberta that she not only arrives at an inconvenient moment but also that her Russian friend—by aesthetic means—knows how to make herself attractive. Inspired by art motifs, she has placed herself in a setting with red lights from a paraffin stove, and above the divan there is a single gas jet with a rose-coloured silk shade over it. "Under it Marushka was enthroned with her legs drawn up beneath her, supported by brightly coloured cushions on all sides like the inhabitant of a harem" (p. 187) [Under den troner Marusjka med bena trukket oppunder seg, støttet av farveprektige puter på alle kanter som en haremsdame (p. 153)]. She is wearing a black kimono with gold embroidery and lets her small pink toes appear under the fabric. From the table beside her, smoke from an incense lamp curls up in arabesque forms; a cigarette rests in Marushka's hand. "Between the kimono and her short hair her face, neck and breast had something satisfied and creamy-white about it, a strange, thick fullness, here and there toning into the rose-coloured light from the lampshade" (pp. 187–88) [Mellom kimonoen og det kortklipte håret har ansikt, hals og bryst noe mettet og fløtehvitt, en eiendommelig, tett fylde, hist og her tonende over i rosa fra skjermen (p. 154)]. Doubtless, Sandel has here portrayed a woman in an ekphrastic way, using an art motif as inspiration.[13]

The German Liesel is not only a sad character because of her love story and abortion experience, she is also a promising artist. Liesel is Sandel's main example of a woman who negotiates through existence and tries to make her artist life and her human life go together. Liesel is talented, disciplined and works hard; she goes to the Academy Colarossi, she goes to the Pont Neuf and the Luxembourg Garden with her easel and palette, and she draws *croquis*, quick and sketchy drawings of a live model. However, Liesel tends to overwork her paintings thus destroying them, and when Alberta sees a study from Pont Neuf with the back turned out, she takes it as a bad sign: "Traces of yellow ochre along the edge of the canvas frame and on the skirt of Liesel's dress emphasized the connection between them" (p. 13) [Spor av guloker langs blindrammens kant og på Liesels kjoleskjørt markerer tydelig sammenhengen mellom den og henne— – —(p. 13)]. Considering Liesel's story, this observation is significant. The destroyed painting that must be hidden, the spots on her dress, and the suggested connection between art and gender, can be read as signs, not only of the difficult combination of woman and artist, but also of the problematic pregnancy that must be terminated. In this observation of the physical relation between the painting and Liesel's body, Sandel manages to hint at the future complications, thereby making Liesel's destructive tendencies a predestination of her tragic abortion.

However, it is not Sandel's intention to make this victim position a final statement of the female artist's abilities. When Liesel's unfinished or overworked paintings are mentioned, the contextual circumstances always explain what happens. And when she completes a work, it seems to be of high quality. One of her paintings is accepted at the autumn exhibition, and Marushka describes how many

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[13] The kimono is several times associated with women in erotic situations. Taking Marushka as an example, as she installs herself among silk cushions in pink lightning, expecting a friend or a customer, the "woman in kimono" becomes an unequivocal image of bodily and sexual accessibility. Alberta is obviously aware of these aspects of the kimono, but at the same time, she enjoys wearing it because it gives the air access to her senses. The "woman in kimono" motif was a favorite in French contemporary art at the time.

of her artist friends have given the work a very positive critique; only Sivert thinks it must have been a coincident and cannot understand why Liesel's picture has a prominent display while Eliel's statue has been pushed into a corner. In a suggestive manner, Sandel reveals the gendered prejudices that female artists must fight; her narrative also seems to imply that the private sphere is a larger obstacle than the public one for a female talent to develop.

In her Paris novel, Sandel depicts women who have broken with their bourgeois background and try to live autonomous and independent lives. She describes the "New Woman"[14] with an intention to work herself through, regardless of basic problems of both an economic and ideological kind. Sandel introduces motifs like pregnancy and abortion, prostitution and nude modelling, as well as a general portrayal of women's precarious conditions in the urban space. She lets her text be influenced by references to visual arts and aesthetic norms, but her female protagonists must renounce their own artistic ambitions as soon as they get erotically involved with men. Alberta's life resembles Liesel's, but she decides to keep her baby when she gets pregnant. Slowly, she starts writing small pieces that she secretly collects in her suitcase, hoping that they may someday be the start of an authorship.

4. Urban Observers and Gender Norms

Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin famously introduced the motif of the observing artist of urban life and coined the concept of the *flâneur*, both inferring that this modern subject was male (Baudelaire [1863] 1964; Benjamin 2006) . Some gender scholars have supported this view and, like Griselda Pollock, maintained that "there is no female equivalent of the quintessential masculine figure, the flâneur: there is not and could not be a female flâneuse".[15] Main arguments were the social conditions, which were different for men and women, and women's lack of access to parts of public life. Others have instead found female representatives of the flâneur and, like Deborah L. Parsons, emphasised the term's not only socio-historical meaning but also its significance as a metaphor for the perspective of the modern urban subject and its gender ambiguities.[16] Without inserting our two novels directly into this flânerie discussion—they do not quite correspond to the idea of a city stroller and lover of life unconfined of substantial problems—I will use the idea of an urban observer, male or female, confronted with gendered norms in a modern metropolis, as a guideline for a concluding comparison.

In this sense, and to underscore the artistic tradition, I will follow Tone Selboe's view in her study of female city strollers, where she distinguishes between the flâneur and these women:

> "I will call them literary vagabonds, the women who tell (about) the city, and this concept includes both the authors themselves and their fictive persons. They let themselves be carried away by the wings of their feet and the desire of their eyes, they look, paint and write, they sit and walk, they stroll around, they do nothing, they protect themselves from invading gazes and close steps; they are travellers in the world of the street—whether they are abroad or at home—but in their restless drive for an identity and a place of their own, they do not possess much of the self-conscious pose of the classic flâneur. They are all city strollers and can thus be said to share some of the traits of the flâneur, but they only exceptionally approach the metropolis with a conscious act of situating or positioning themselves in order to turn impressions into expressions. It is rather the random event, the map of memory or the unmotivated longing that impels the walking."[17]

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[14] The "New Woman" is a concept that emerged in the late 19th century to refer to women who sought independence and became feminist models of a radical change. Cf. Witt-Brattström (ed.), *The New Woman* (Witt-Brattström 2004).
[15] *Vision and Difference* (Pollock 1988, p. 71).
[16] *Streetwalking* (Parsons 2000, p. 4).
[17] *Litteræ vaganter* (Selboe 2003, p. 10, my translation).

> [Jeg vil kalle dem litterære vaganter, kvinnene som forteller (om) byen, og i den betegnelsen inngår både forfatterne selv og deres fiktive personer. De lar seg rive med av føttenes vinger og øyets lyst, de betrakter, maler og skriver, de sitter og de går; de streifer om, de driver dank, de beskytter seg mot invaderende blikk og nærgående skritt; de er på reise i gatens verden—enten de er i utlandet eller hjemlandet—men i sin rastløse drift etter egen identitet og eget sted eier de lite av den klassiske flanørens selvbevisste positur. De er alle byvandrere og kan derfor sies å bære noe av flanørens merke i pannen, men de inntar bare unntaksvis en bevisst situering eller posisjonering i forhold til storbyen i den hensikt å forme inntrykk til uttrykk. Det er snarere tilfellet, erindringskartet eller den umotiverte lengselen som er vandringens drivkraft.]

Hamsun's *Hunger* constructs an urban space from the point of view of a man who has no described background and struggles to make a living as an author. His activities are, to a large extent, performed and interpreted as a gendered enterprise, and gender norms sanction his affects and reactions, especially when he fails and suffers. Moreover, this gendering applies not only to sexual situations and relationships to women, several examples of which we have noted but also to his troubles in other arenas, which are regularly conceived as markets. To follow up on my former analysis, I will give another three examples to underpin this view—one from the food market, one from the lodging market, and one from the publishing market.

The first person that Hamsun's man encounters while strolling hungrily in the street is a woman outside the butcher shop. He describes her extremely selectively: "She had only a single tooth in the front of her mouth" (p. 6) [Hun havde blot én Tand i Formunden (p. 6)]; and her eyes are "full of sausage" (p. 7) [fuldt af Pølse (p. 7)]. His empty stomach clearly governs his perception of her, and as a projection of his pain the woman even enlarges his hunger. She not only has, but *is* what he wants, and his grievance and anger are fuelled by this gendered piece of meat.

A similar procedure takes place in his relationship to his matron in Vaterland, whose power to kick him out of his lodgings strongly influences his description of her. When she asks him to move out, he sees her "pregnant belly bulging out toward me" (p. 198) [hendes store, frugtsommelige Mave strutted ud imod mig (p. 303)], and when she finally threatens him with the police, he contemplates "the most awful bloodshed, a blow that would strike her dead instantly, a kick in the belly" (p. 205) [den værste Blodsudgydelse, et Tryk, som kunde lægge hende død paa Stedet, et Spark i Maven (p. 314)]. The landlady's pregnancy functions as a sign of her threatening position vis-à-vis the moneyless tenant and connotes the economic power she has over him.

In contrast to earlier parts of the novel, the I-person in this last critical period of his stay in Kristiania, which ends with his departure, discloses to the reader what he is writing about. The more desperately distressed he is, the more he focuses on a grotesque female character, whose monstrosity makes his brain swollen. He imagines the woman as a "gorgeous fanatical whore who had sinned in the temple" (p. 187) [herlig fanatisk Skøge, der havde syndet i Templet (p. 284)], and he elaborates on how she would be intolerable to look at: "Her body was to be misshapen and repulsive: tall, very skinny and rather dark, with long legs that showed through her skirts with every step she took. She would also have big, protruding ears" (p. 187) [Hendes Krop skulde være mangelfuld og frastøtende: høj, meget mager og en Smule mørk, og naar hun gik, vilde hendes lange Ben komme til at skinde igennem hendes Skørter for hvert Skridt hun tog. Hun skulde ogsaa have store udstaaende Ører (pp. 284–859)]. However, most of all, he is interested in her "shamelessness, the desperate excess of premeditated sin that she had committed" (p. 187) [skamløshed, dette desperate Topmaal af overlagt Synd, som hun havde begaaet (p. 285)].

Clearly, he alludes to misogynist myths of a mixed female monster and *femme fatale*, which both circulated frequently in European *fin-de-siècle* culture.[18] A more specific and plausible reason for

[18] *Idols of Perversity* (Dijkstra [1986] 1988).

why she occurs so manifestly in his writings at this very moment, is—combined with the lodging problematic—that his many refused texts and his troubles with being recognised by the publishers exclude him from the book and paper market. The imagination of an evil and repulsive woman mirrors his disappointment and desperation and shows how he utilises feminised images of horror to reflect his pain. Phantasies of the destructive woman, her eroticism and fertility are mainstream images that he invokes when he stares against the wall, but simultaneously they work both as projections of his failure and as reminders of the current gender hierarchy. When he is at the bottom of all, an even lower creature helps comfort his ego.

Sandel's *Alberta and Freedom* constructs an urban space from the point of view of a woman who only step by step recognises her ability to write. Coming from an urban bourgeois home in Norway, she attempts to make a living in the artisan life of Paris. Alberta's situation is profoundly governed by gender norms, which are reflected not only in the responses and sanctions she encounters in social life, but also in her low self-esteem. Unlike that of Hamsun's man, Alberta's struggle concerns overcoming the gendered, internalised barriers that frame her life. When she fails and suffers, her inclination is not like his—to attack the gendered counterpart with a subjugating evaluation, but instead to seek solidarity with other people. Following up on my former analysis, I will give two examples to support this view—one concerning a sense of relationship with the streetwalker and one concerning an exhibition of human others.

When posing for Mr. Digby, Alberta reluctantly feels related to other women in a similar situation, and she mentions models and streetwalkers in the same breath. "She understood the model who once, at Colarossi's, suddenly pulled a face at someone who had come in and just stood and stared. She understood the prostitute who hurls a contemptuous term of abuse in the face of the woman walking by. She felt an obscure solidarity with them" (p. 8) [Hun forstår den modellen som engang på Colarossi plutselig gjepte til noen, som kom inn og sto og så og ikke hadde foretatt seg noe annet enn å stå og se. Hun forstår gatepiken som kaster et foraktelig slengord i ansiktet på damen som går forbi. Dunkelt kjenner hun samfølelse med dem (p. 9)]. Sandel hints at the standard opinion that the work as a model was not respectable but could be associated with prostitution. Later in the novel, when Alberta visits an upper-class home together with her friend Veigaard, she in fact experiences being taken for a prostitute by the servants. "They thought I came from the street" (p. 123) [De tok meg for en fra gaten (p. 101)], she explains to her astonished companion. In the absence of the house owners, the servants politely, but decidedly refuse to offer the guests a meal. Extremely embarrassed because it is the home of his sister, Veigaard excuses the servants but is also angry because of their unexpected behaviour. Alberta, though, knows from the beginning that she is out of place; she instinctively foresees the outcome of the situation and ends up blaming herself.

When she is in desperate need of money later, she in fact considers taking to the street: "An old and evil thought reared its head, watchful as a poisonous reptile: I could go on the streets, earn ten francs, twenty francs, hide them in my stocking and earn more, I, as well as others. [. . .] I could always be of use on the streets" (pp. 190–91) [En ond gammel tanke stikker hodet opp, påpasselig som et giftig kryp: Jeg kunne gå ut på gaten. Tjene ti francs, gjemme dem i strømpen og tjene flere, jeg så vel som andre [. . .] på gaten duger jeg alltid (p. 156)]. However, she rejects the thought and instead accepts the support of Sivert, who offers to let her stay with him. With a powerful sense of shame and gratefulness, Alberta ends up modelling for Sivert, and her fight for freedom is ironically sealed with a relationship to a man whom she would never have considered a lover, and who even makes her dependent on him. In a gender perspective, this liaison is not surprising because it is realised according to the power of social norms, but at the same time, the narrative foregrounds Alberta's solidarity with her rescuer as a decisive motif of her choice.

Liesel's shocking abortion experience clearly works in favour of a positive conclusion when Alberta likewise is confronted with the question of whether she should give birth to a child. Another "push" in the same direction occurs when she and Sivert walk along the Boulevard Clichy and jump into a crowded tent "village", exhibiting, as a poster announces, "man-eating tribes from Central

Africa" (p. 239) [menneskeetende stammer fra Afrikas indre (p. 195)]. Alberta insists on taking a closer look at these people, with whom she sympathises because they—with an echo from her own posing—must "put themselves on show" (p. 239) [stille seg til skue (p. 195)]. Obviously, the exhibition is organised as a Parisian happening to expose cultural difference and implicitly the inferior status of the Africans. The Western superior gaze certainly governs Alberta's perspective, but her dominating inclination is to feel pity because of their poverty and to recognise their condition of being exploited and out of place. Sivert's immediate response is to avoid the event—the place is crowded and smells bad—but soon he gets fascinated and picks up his drawing equipment. Alberta instead approaches a "Negress" (p. 240) [negerinne (p. 196)] who sits in a small tent with a baby by her breast. This woman understands Alberta's situation, smiles at her, and "something was released in Alberta's heart" (p. 241) [har noe løst seg i brystet (p. 197)]. Contrary to Sivert, who remains a distant outsider and purposefully makes use of the ethnic others for his artistic aims, Alberta identifies with the mother in the tent and ultimately decides to become one herself.

5. Hungry Bodies and Attempts at Writing

Both novels focus on the individual body and develop a modernist style that foregrounds the sensing subject's interaction with his or her surroundings. In the following, I will highlight similarities and differences in terms of how the novels depict the main characters' relationships to their own bodies, and accordingly interpret their phenomenologically founded aesthetics.[19] From this point of view, I will discuss how the performativity of the body is part of the hero's literary ambitions (in Hamsun's case) and the heroine's more humble dream of a hidden talent (in Sandel's case).

The first-person narrative in *Hunger* makes the body appear as both a subject and an object, and the novel describes an almost endless variety of situations where the I-person senses and interprets his own body.[20] In a scene in the first part (of four), the I-person is walking around in the Palace Park [Slottsparken], reflecting on why God has chosen exactly him for such a miserable life. He watches other people and finds their happiness expressed in their bodies: "no sign of grief in a single eye that I saw, no burden on any shoulder" (p. 15) [ikke Sorg i et eneste Øje, jeg saa, ingen Byrde på nogen Skulder (p. 25)]. Correspondingly, his own unhappiness is a bodily phenomenon: "My whole being was at this moment filled with the utmost anguish; even my arms ached, and I could barely endure carrying them in the usual way" (p. 16) [Mit hele Væsen var i dette Øjeblik i den højeste grad af Pine; jeg havde endog Smærter i Armene og kunde knapt holde ud at bære dem paa sædvanlig Maade (pp. 26–27)]. The pain is localised in his arms, which are perceived as detached from the torso. In the I-person's perception, the body is atomised and split apart, and these parts are even transformed into objects that must be carried instead of being carrying-subjects themselves. This tendency to see the body as an external and alienated object is a typical reaction, which underpins the view that perception *as such* is a main concern in the text. Another example is the continuation of the same scene, where he experiences troubles with his head:

> "I had noticed distinctly that every time I went hungry for quite a long time it was as though my brain trickled quietly out of my head, leaving me empty. My head grew light and absent, I could no longer feel its weight on my shoulders, and I had the impression that my eyes showed a too wide stare when I looked at somebody" (p. 17).

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[19] By phenomenology, I understand a literary description of a subject that foregrounds the interpretation of his or her world from the perspective of a sensing body. For an instructive discussion of the influences from phenomenology (Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty) on post-structuralist gender theory (Butler), see (Coole 2008).

[20] The novel's tempus is primarily past tense but with many uses of present tense. This temporal arrangement produces a dynamic between the narrating 'I' and the experiencing 'I', a rhythm that sometimes visualises the distance between them and sometimes blurs it. While the sensing activity must be tied to the experiencing subject, both the experiencing and the narrating subject are interpreting their perceptions.

> [Jeg havde saa tydelig mærket, at naar jeg sulted lidt længe ad Gangen, var det ligesom min Hjærne randt mig ganske stille ud af Hovedet og gjorde mig tom. Mit Hoved blev let og fraværende, jeg følte ikke længer dets Tyngde paa mine Skuldre, og jeg havde en Fornæmmelse af, at mine Øjne glante altfor vidaabent, naar jeg saa paa nogen (p. 27).]

To describe hunger as an experience that makes the brain pour out, leaving the head empty and light, is a body-centred description of a failing intellectual and creative capacity, but it also aligns the body with a thing. Here, we can observe that he not only senses what his eyes can see, but also what they look like. In this way, the different body parts are made autonomous and partly reified, and their functions as necessary instruments for perception and thinking attract his interest more than their phenomenal referents do.

The head as a physical centre for his nervousness and God's responsibility for his humiliating condition get a very concrete description in a vision where all metaphysics is blown away:

> "God had stuck his finger down into the network of my nerves and gently, quite casually, brought a little confusion among the threads. And God had withdrawn his finger and behold!—there were fibres and delicate filaments on his finger from the threads of my nerves. In addition, there was a gaping hole after his finger, which was God's finger, and wounds in my brain from the track of his finger" (p. 17).
>
> [Gud havde stukket sin Finger ned i mit Nervenet og lempeligt, ganske løseligt bragt lidt Uorden i Traadene. Og Gud havde trukket sin Finger tilbage, og der var Trevler og fine Rodtraade paa Fingeren af mine Nervers Traade. Og der var et aabent Hul efter hans Finger, som var Guds Finger, og Saar i min Hjærne efter hans Fingers Veje (p. 29).]

God works as a surgeon, but instead of healing the brain, his operation leaves holes and traumas. The irony that strikes the Christian childhood understanding is distinct, but first and foremost we notice a kind of de-souling taking place, both of the divine authority and of the human consciousness, leaving pure physiology and a de-animated body.

Soon after, he lies on a bench and seemingly recovers his ideas and thoughts, but the text dwells instead upon the way in which he looks at his own body: "As I lie there in this position, letting my eyes wander down my breast and legs, I notice the twitching motion made by my foot at each beat of my pulse" (p. 18) [Idet jeg ligger i denne Stilling og lader Øjnene løbe nedad mit Bryst og mine Ben, lægger jeg Mærke til den sprættende Bevægelse, min Fod gør, hver Gang Pulsen slaar (p. 31)]. He notices a foot that seems to move on its own and is encouraged by the sight. It is as though he "had met a good friend or got back a torn-off part of me: a feeling of recognition trembles through all my senses, tears spring to my eyes, and I perceive my shoes as a softly murmuring tune coming toward me" (p. 18) [havde truffet en god Bekendt eller faaet en løsreven Part af mig selv tilbage; en Genkendelsesfølelse sittrer gennem mine Sandser, Taarerne kommer mig i Øjnene (p. 31)]. In the very moment he thinks he has retrieved his creativity, he seemingly perceives a reunion of his body parts. In his consciousness, the fragmented body relates to alienation and failing intellectual capacity, and the complete body, inversely, to recognition and creativity.

However now he is caught by an opposite irony because his body is synecdochically represented by a pair of shoes:

> "Then I begin, as though I'd never seen my shoes before, to study their appearance, their mimicry when I move my feet, their shape and the worn uppers, and I discover that their wrinkles and their white seams give them an expression, lend them a physiognomy. Something of my own nature had entered into these shoes—they affected me like a breath upon my being, a living, breathing part of me" (p. 19).
>
> [Som om jeg aldrig havde set mine Sko før, giver jeg mig til at studere deres Udseende, deres Mimik, naar jeg rørte paa Foden, deres Form og de slidte Overdele, og jeg opdager, at deres

> Rynker og hvide Sømmer giver dem Udtryk, meddeler dem Fysiognomi. Der var noget af mit eget Væsen gaaet over i disse Sko, de virked paa mig som en Aande mot mit Jeg, en pustende Del af mig selv (pp. 31–32).]

Instead of regaining unification of body and soul, of experiencing the body as complete and vigorous, he must accept that the cerebral matter has left his head and now seems to occupy his shoes. Ironically, God has emptied his head of soul and instead animated his shoes.

As these examples show, the I-person's sensing is an important topic in *Hunger*. Through sense descriptions, the novel explores its main character's relationship with his surroundings. Sight, sound, smell, taste and touch govern the man's activities and stimulate his thoughts and actions. However, the perceptions are never pure or neutral, but fundamentally based on his physical condition, which allows him to read the world from a hungry stomach's point of view.

This material focus guides the creativity topic as well. Thus, as a point of departure, the writing is introduced as a way of making a living in the commercial market. "And indeed, when I was lucky and it turned out well, I would occasionally get five kroner for an afternoon's work" (p. 5) [Nu og da, naar Lykken var god, kunde jeg drive det til at faa fem Kroner af et eller andet Blad for en Føljeton (p. 2)]. After a while, however, this practical aim is met and overruled by an ambition of achieving social importance and artistic recognition. Slowly, the idea surfaces that writing is a spiritually inspired activity, and our hero concludes eventually that the divine spirit will help him produce a work of genius. After a successful act of writing he exclaims: "'It's God! It's God' I cried to myself, and I wept from enthusiasm over my own words;" (p. 30) [Det er Gud! det er Gud! raabte jeg til mig selv, og jeg græd af Begejstring over mine egne Ord (p. 53)]. At the same time however, this romantic-metaphysical understanding of the enigma of inspiration is immediately unseated as he reminds himself of his trivial surroundings: "every now and then I had to stop and listen for a moment, in case someone should be on the stairs" (p. 30) [. . . nu og da maatte jeg standse op og lytte et Øjeblik om der skulde komme nogen i Trapperne (p. 53)]. As a parallel to this development, though, the result is increasingly poorer until he gives up his writing effort in the end.

Hence, art in *Hunger* is described on the one hand as an almost industrial process with the sole intention of earning money, and as a unique endeavour in the service of and created by divine inspiration on the other. The novel's irony—and ambiguity—may be identified as a deconstruction of both positions, leaving the most pertinent reading to emphasise its body aesthetics. The body's situation has a lasting influence on the creativity of the ambitious.

The scene introducing Alberta in Sandel's novel not only describes the model's feeling of being an object of other people's watching and the exposure of her naked body; it also shows how she directs her eyes at her own body. Reflected in a mirror, Alberta can examine her body from the outside:

> "She could see her body in the long mirror, thin and lithe, clad in spare, lean muscles which arched and curved a little here and there, not much, not more than fitting. A controlled nakedness, without exaggeration, without any crass stamp of gender. If she had to be a woman, she could not very well demand to be encumbered with less (p. 6)."
>
> [I det store speilet ser hun seg selv, tynn og lang i linjene, kledd i knappe, magre muskler, som buer og runder seg litt hist og her, ikke meget, ikke mer enn at en kan være det bekjent. En behersket nakenhet, uten overdrivelser, uten krast preg av kjønn. Når en først er et kvinnemenneske, kan en ikke godt forlange å være beheftet med mindre (p. 8)].

In her own estimation, her body is all right. She is satisfactory, neither too much nor too little body, neither too much nor too little woman. To Alberta, her body's exterior is not a problem. Her problem is the inner body, the one that walks around with invisible and undefined longings—longings that are metaphorically called "absorption" [sug] or "hunger" [sult]. This longing is something both *in* the body and something that can be measured *by* it, which is why the sensing body becomes such an important element of the novel's aesthetics. Time, for instance, materialises physically as a bodily

experience. Already in the first scene, time is described as something that begins "to creep painfully forward in the way Alberta remembers from her childhood" (p. 5) [krype på den vonde måten Alberte husker fra barn (p. 7)]. Posing on the model's stand, the physically felt time reminds her of the way time would creep in the church and of the silent walks with her Dad. "She could sense physically how it crowded slowly past her, tenacious, absorptive, exhausting, how it could be heard and felt" (pp. 5–6) [Rent legemlig sanser hun hvordan den langsomt stimer forbi henne, seig, sugende, mattende, den bade høres og føles (p. 7)]. Alberta's body becomes a time measurer, a device where temporal experiences make their imprints. Her sense of time is therefore fundamentally anchored in the body, which experiences, archives and recollects events.

The absorptive body operates between past and present and shapes a pattern where childhood memories are used as a frame of interpretation of current events. Memories tend to fill in gaps and provide explanations, either confirmative or contrastive, of those moments in Alberta's life that unfold as bodily experiences and conditions. Being hungry may from this perspective have different meanings, such as grabbing some food after skiing or quieting a sudden appetite in haste because it takes too long until the meal is served. This kind of hunger can be satisfied. In her simple room in Paris, things are different, and even after Alberta has had some tea, biscuits and marmalade, she is still hungry. "Hungry? Yes . . . " (p. 12) [Sulten? Ja—(p. 13)]. However not hungry in the same way as that time in her childhood. "No—now there was the eternal dissatisfaction of the body, which remained after she had eaten, which could not be quieted, only deadened and diverted. With tea, for instance, and cigarettes" (p. 12) [Nei—en kroppens evige utilfredshet, som er der også når en har spist. Som ikke kan stilles, bare døves og avledes. Med te for eksempel og sigaretter (p. 13)].

This incongruence between inner longings and outer appearance strikes her as strange. On the wall above the grate, there is a mirror in which she observes a person who does not quite fit to her inner ego. She sees "the contours of the unknown girl she meets in the mirrors wherever she settles down, a figure she would never be rid of and never understand, never quite succeed in aligning with her inner self" (pp. 29–30) [konturene av den ukjente, som hun treffer igjen i speilene, hvor hun så oppslår sin bopel, en fremtoning hun aldri blir kvitt og aldri blir klok på, aldri riktig får til å rime med sitt indre menneske (pp. 26–27)]. Alberta's inner self works as an inert memory, while her outer, experiencing self continually negotiates with the present surroundings and remembered past. For instance, the adult woman's worries about money, debt, loneliness and longing are metaphorically called an "empty paralysis" (p. 172) [tom lammelse (p. 142)] that spreads into her arms and hands and are compared to worries that ride a child "before the skin has formed on its soul" (p. 173) [uten ferdig hud på sjelen (p. 142)]. After the loss of her friend Veigaard, who dies in a car crash, she is knocked out by a pain that she hardly manages to live with, and she is reminded of the earlier loss of her parents in an accident. Having reached rock bottom, she is numbed; even the pain is gone. "All that is left is a calcification in the mind, a hard scar, that cannot be affected again" (p. 173) [Alt som er igjen av den, er en forkalkning i sinnet, et hardt arr, som ikke kan angripes mer" (p. 142)]. In this way of responding to suffering, we can recognise a mental pattern in Alberta, whose hungry and absorptive body in Sandel's modernist aesthetics becomes a language for loss, longing and unsatisfied desires.

Verbal images of the body in a variety of situations saturate the text, but unlike Hamsun's body, which tends to fall apart and let the members operate on their own, Sandel's body is complete and functions as a membrane between the inner and outer self. While Hamsun's man lives in the present and negotiates through the city, confronted with numerous projections of his hunger, Sandel's woman carries her past with her and interprets bodily experiences in the frame of memories. Prompted by material deficiencies, her hunger is predominantly caused by unfulfilled longings and intervening memories. Both novels stage a hungry person whose hunger is complete with a surplus of meaning.

At the beginning, Alberta has no writing ambitions, but her writing is a main theme through the novel. Like Hamsun's man she initially writes in order to earn some money and has no expectations whatsoever. On the contrary, her writing is described as a work done "with reluctance and shame" (p. 32) [med uvilje og skamfølelse (p. 28)]. At the same time, she writes other things, too, something

"different" (p. 32) [annerledes (p. 28)], but those pieces are useless and nothing she can submit to a paper. The writing practice is only a "form of idling" (p. 32) [form for lediggang (p. 28)]. Sometimes she destroys her texts, but mostly she hides them in a suitcase; she has a miserable weakness for this nightly endeavour. Slowly, she begins thinking that these fragments may be put together to make up something comprehensive, thus she finds the courage and self-conscience to go on writing.

Similar to Hamsun's man, Alberta has an inner drive to write, but unlike him, it takes more time for her to believe in her talent. Similar to him, she is unable to create during periods when the material and mental circumstances are too daunting, but unlike him, she blames herself instead of fighting real obstacles and phantasised demons. While Hamsun's man in the end flees the city and seemingly gives up his writing, Sandel's woman appears certain about something that could perhaps become literature.

Hamsun's novel ends with a hero who escapes from the city and renounces his writing ambitions, leaving the reader uncertain about the result of his efforts. His response to the city, where his spiritual claims have been met by material poverty and a hungry body, is to turn his back on everything for the time being. Sandel's novel instead ends in a harmonising gesture from Alberta to Sivert, wherein they agree to accept the child and stay together. She has found, at least impermanently, a haven where the loving and reproductive part of her identity has become an answer; she is satisfied because her writing project remains latently fertile and has not been abandoned.

6. Conclusions

Both novels show that the modern subject in city space is gendered—and gendered differently. Both characters, Hamsun's man and Sandel's woman, construct their urban surroundings through a gendered gaze and are themselves constructed as man and woman in a social and cultural setting. Moreover, the novels also show how this process takes place within a context of normativity, implying that gender norms are revealed as the premises of the performative subjects' frames of action.

Even though the novels are published more than forty years apart and take place in different cities, they have some structural traits in common when it comes to gender norms. Hamsun's man experiences humiliation when lacking economic means, the correct attire, food, lodgings, masculine attraction, sex appeal, and success as an author. All these weaknesses threaten to feminise him, thus revealing that femininity is a norm that is constructed as inferior and therefore something against which he must fight. Concurrently, these norms help him construct an enemy—a female other—who is even more inferior than him. The feminised imagery of the novel—*femme fatale*, monster, prostitute, etc.—discloses how these misogynist myths look, and the man's struggle in the modern city truly explains why they continue to work.

Sandel's Alberta experiences *being* the inferior feminine. Her existence in the modern urban space is a constant struggle, not only due to poverty but also due to a position of being degraded and precariously exposed to the male gaze and its dominating power. Not only does her work as a nude model make her extremely exposed to devaluating judgements, but her normal appearance as a poor woman also implies—according to cultural norms—that she is inferior, on the edge of being the worst of all, a prostitute. To Alberta there is no superior masculine position available, and to the extent that she assesses her male friends and acquaintances, she does so by means of irony. Thus, she walks through the city in search of other individuals in inferior positions with whom she can find solidarity. The palette of female friends with similar experiences underscores the novel's inter-subjective intentions and foregrounds a kind of solidarity, if not intimacy, between the women.

To both protagonists, inferior femininity is a constant option and threat, but their responses and actions are different. The strategy of the male subject in *Hunger* is to fight his way up from humiliation by humiliating the female other; the strategy of the female subject in *Alberta and Freedom* is instead to seek solidarity with persons who have experiences similar to her own.

Hamsun's man and Sandel's woman both perceive their own bodies as crucial to the interpretation of their physical surroundings. But while the hero in *Hunger* must deal with a body falling apart and a confrontation with the world that depends on a totally fragmented bodily experience, the heroine

in *Alberta and Freedom* instead sees herself as a body divided between outer appearance and inner inclinations. He chooses to leave the scene in a preliminary insight of having lost any opportunity, while she stays and presumably chooses a harmonious family life.

Both novels stage a person with writing proclivities in a city setting where the success or failure of artistic work is subjected to the mechanisms of a market economy. Their artistic ambitions are to a large extent decided by their material conditions, which seem to manipulate Hamsun's hero out of the whole business, and Sandel's heroine to stay calm and not give up. The gender aspect of these choices is to see Hamsun's man's escape as analogous to his failure to connect with possible acquaintances, while Sandel's woman's staying could be read as analogous to her ability to connect with other people. In common is the belief in the body's basis as a denominator for the perception and interpretation of sensual and cognitive impressions of the world.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Article

In the Traces of Modernism: William Faulkner in Swedish Criticism 1932–1950

Mats Jansson

Department of Literature, History of Ideas, and Religion, Göteborgs Universitet, 412 56 Göteborg, Sweden; mats.jansson@lir.gu.se

Received: 13 August 2018; Accepted: 30 September 2018; Published: 4 October 2018

Abstract: This article focusses the reception of William Faulkner in Sweden from the first introduction in 1932 until the Nobel Prize announcement in 1950. Through reviews, introductory articles, book chapters, forewords, and translations, the critical evaluation of Faulkner's particular brand of modernism is traced and analyzed. The analysis takes theoretical support from Hans Robert Jauss' notion of 'horizon of expectations', Gérard Genette's concept of 'paratext', and E.D. Hirsh's distinction between 'meaning' and 'significance'. To pinpoint the biographical and psychologizing tendency in Swedish criticism, Roland Barthes's notion of 'biographeme' is introduced. The analysis furthermore shows that the critical discussion of Faulkner's modernism could be ordered along an axis where the basic parameters are form and content, aesthetics and ideology, narrator and author, and writer and reader. The problematics adhering to these fundamental aspects are more or less relevant for the modernist novel in general. Thus, it could be argued that the reception of Faulkner in Sweden and Swedish Faulkner criticism epitomize and highlight the fundamental features pertaining to the notion of 'modernism', both with regard to its formal and content-based characteristics.

Keywords: William Faulkner; Swedish literary criticism; Nobel Prize; modernism; reception history; aesthetics and ideology; meaning and significance

1. Introduction, Aim, and Scope

William Faulkner is a distinctly American writer who is deeply rooted in the cultural milieu and historical tradition of the American South. He is also an international author and preeminent modernist writer, whose importance and influence puts him beside James Joyce, Marcel Proust, and Virginia Woolf in the renewal and development of the novel in the 20th century. His writings epitomize modernist narrative innovations in their handling of time, mode, and voice, and they embody the modernist tendency to strip away the illusions of reality. Indeed, as Daniel J. Singal has pointed out in a characterization of Faulkner's modernism: "the Modernist ethos insists on confronting the ugly, the sordid, and the terrible, for that is where the most important lessons are to be found. In stark contrast to Victorianism, Modernism—in its ideal form—eschews innocence and demands instead a full, candid apprehension of 'reality', no matter how painful that may be" (Singal 1997, p. 12). From an historical perspective, one could presume that Faulkner's modernist handling of both form and content posed a challenge to his early readers, and perhaps even proved to be an obstacle. If so, in what way, and how was it received?

The aim and scope of this article is to trace the reception of Faulkner's modernism in reviews, introductory articles, book chapters, forewords, and translations. In 1950, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, but when were his writings first introduced in Swedish criticism? How was Faulkner's brand of modernism initially interpreted and evaluated? What were the questions and problems that it raised for reviewers and critics? How did they formulate their answers, and with what arguments? Consequently, this article takes the form of a piece of reception history, following the traces of Faulkner criticism in Swedish letters from the early 1930s until 1950.

Starting from the end with the award ceremony speech for the Nobel Prize in literature 1949—which was delivered with one year's delay at the ceremony in 1950—the novelist and journalist Gustaf Hellström, a member of the Swedish Academy, characterized William Faulkner as "the great experimentalist among 20th century novelists. Scarcely two of his novels are similar technically. It seems as if by this continuous renewal he wanted to achieve the increased breadth which his limited world, both in geography and in subject matter, cannot give him" (Hellström 1950; Espmark 1986, p. 88). Hellström's speech and characterization in 1950 of Faulkner as a groundbreaking modernist could be regarded as the final token of the institutionalization of Faulkner's brand of literary modernism. It is also a culmination point of the Swedish reception history that started back in the early 1930s, when Faulkner's writings were gradually being introduced into Swedish letters.

The years around 1930 marked a time of cultural change and literary renewal in Swedish letters that proved to be a turning point for modernism in Sweden. A new generation of modernist writers appeared; among these was the poet and critic Artur Lundkvist, who came to be the most persistent and influential Faulker spokesman in the decades to follow. The writers of the Swedish modernist generation where all to various degrees inspired and influenced by international modernist writers and trends, which they also helped to introduce via translations and introductory articles. The new literary magazines played a particularly vital role in this process as platforms for the presentation, explanation, and defense of international modernist writers and their aesthetics. The journals *kontakt* (1931), *Fronten* (1931–32), *Spektrum* (1931–33), *BLM* (Bonnier's Literary Magazine 1932–2004), and *Karavan* (1934–35) opened their pages to the international literary scene. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* was introduced and translated by critic Erik Mesterton and author Karin Boye in *Spektrum* in 1932, the novelist Eyvind Johnson in 1931 published the first presentation of the French surrealist movement in *kontakt*, a movement that Lundkvist and seminal modernist poet Gunnar Ekelöf later introduced at length in *Karavan*. Johnson also wrote articles on André Gide and Marcel Proust in the newspaper *Ny Tid* (New Time) in 1927 and 1928. New developments in psychoanalysis heavily influenced the cultural debate at the time. Freud and Jung were used as reference points and analytical tools by avant-garde critics to capture new and complex ways of portraying man, such as for instance in the introduction of Faulkner to Swedish readers. Though the concept of 'modernism' as such was never discussed at any length, the cultural and literary milieu around the avant-garde was of course disposed to newness and change in various forms.

2. Through the 1930s: *Sanctuary* as Modernist Touchstone

In this dynamic time when international modernism first began to seep into Swedish letters, Artur Lundkvist in 1932 published the first Swedish article on William Faulkner in the magazine *BLM*. Lundkvist is no doubt the most important and influential Swedish Faulkner critic in the 1930s, returning to Faulkner in an array of highly appreciative articles in *BLM* (Lundkvist 1933, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1939a). Fragments of them were subsequently brought together in Lundkvist's chapter on Faulkner in the essay collection *Ikarus' flykt* (1939, The Flight of Icarus). Five pages long, his first Faulkner article in 1932 takes stock of Faulkner's writings, presenting short interpretative paraphrases of the plots of his novels up to *Sanctuary* (1931) and the collection of short stories *These 13* (1931). Lundkvist emphasizes the highly experimental character of Faulkner's writing, and describes his technique as filmic: "he chooses the points of view and angles of operation for his depictions like a director chooses his camera positions and brings his scenes together in a kind of montage. The result is a new compositional method." ("han väljer utsikts- och operationspunkter för sina skildringar liksom en regissör väljer kamerainställningar, och han sammanför sina scener i ett slags montage. Resultatet blir en ny kompositionsmetod.") (Lundkvist 1932). According to Lundkvist, Faulkner writes with a new kind of laconic objectivity that creates a distance between the narrator and his motif, and allows for a greater artistic freedom. *Sanctuary* is briefly characterized as "a cruel and perhaps also despairing book" ("en grym bok, måhända också en förtvivlad"), composed almost like a detective novel. Realistic sharpness alternates with "deep probing, surrealistic episodes without any breaks in the course of

events" ("djuplodande surrealistiska avsnitt utan avbrott i förloppet"). That the word 'surrealism' crops up is a reflection of Lundkvist's own engagement with French surrealism at the time.

In his autobiography from 1966 Lundkvist reports that he regarded his introductory article on Faulkner in *BLM* in the autumn of 1932 as his "trump card" ("trumfkort"). At the time, he was also engaged in a translation of Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, which, however, was rejected by the leading publishing house Bonniers (Lundkvist 1966, p. 89). Lundkvist's translation has never been published, and Faulkner's *Sanctuary* was not published until 1951 in a Swedish translation by Mårten Edlund. Lundkvist did however publish the first Swedish translation of a Faulkner text, namely the short story "En ros åt Emily" ("A Rose for Emily") in same issue of *BLM*. In his 1932 article, he furthermore praised the combination of "tragedy and grotesquerie" ("tragedi och grotesk") in *Sanctuary*, and noted that Faulkner's harsh and embittered criticism of life was also interspersed with more lyrical episodes. All of the painful scenes are in the critic's view rendered with great artistic urgency, and the story as a whole was conveyed with an extraordinary suggestive power. However, Lundkvist's enthusiasm was not shared by all of his critics. *Sanctuary* proved to be a tough brew for some Swedish critics in the early 1930s.

In a short review of *Sanctuary* in 1932 in the daily *Dagens Nyheter*, leading critic Sten Selander regarded it as the most repulsive novel in modern literature. The brutality of the story was further increased by the "cold objective style" ("den kallt sakliga stilen") (Selander 1932), which depicted even the most disgusting things as if they were completely natural. According to Selander, that the author never evaluated, commented on, or distanced himself from the reality that he represented was a crucial flaw: "The author never gets upset, never raises his voice, but keeps narrating in the same even, dispassionate tone of voice about a lynching or the grotesque actions at a gangster funeral." ("Författaren blir aldrig upprörd, höjer aldrig rösten, utan berättar bara i samma jämna, lidelsefria tonfall om en lynchning som om de groteska uppträdena vid en gangsterbegravning.") (Selander 1932). In spite of his basically negative evaluation, the critic also recognized that there is another side to this narrative technique. The dreamlike way of shifting focus from one glaring scene to another without any narrative transitions confuses the reader and forces him to guess and fill in the blanks. This has the effect of increasing the reader's feeling of being thrown into a horrible, mad chaos. In this sense, Faulkner's "artistic virtuosity" ("artistiskt virtuosnummer") surpassed most contemporary literature, Selander conceded.

In 1933, Anders Österling argued along the same lines in an extensive review of *Light in August* in the leading conservative newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* that briefly mentioned *Sanctuary*, *Soldier's Pay*, and the short story collection *These Thirteen*. He regarded Faulkner's worldview as a "frightening testimony of what one's taste should have to endure due to the unquestionable intensity of the narrative temperament" ("ett ytterst skrämmande vittnesbörd om vad smaken skall anses tåla på grund av den obestridliga intensiteten i själva berättartemperamentet") (Österling 1933). The critic found a stylistic indifference with regard to the events of the plot in *Light in August*. Faulkner's callousness and insensitivity were said to enable him to depict any scene without apparent disgust. Österling discussed Faulkner's narrative technique—the broken chronology, the complicated composition, and ingenious weaving together of motifs—and maintains that at the same time as Faulkner developed his narrative technique, he also increasingly focused on the violent and abhorrent. *Light in August* was said to be relatively bearable, whereas *Sanctuary* stood out as a "complete monstrosity of gruesome episodes" ("ett fullkomligt vidunder av ruskighet").

In 1932, the critic Henning Söderhjelm published a long review of *Sanctuary* in *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* in which he pointed to Faulkner's inclination for "the morbid as well as the obscure" ("det morbida liksom det dunkla") (Söderhjelm 1932). Among Faulkner's literary ancestors, the critic counted Poe, Baudelaire, and Dostoyevsky. He characterized Faulkner's method as "impressionistic" ("impressionistisk") in that individual scenes follow each other in a phantasmagoria. Faulkner calls forth a series of atmospheres and does not hold back on the gruesome and repulsive in order to awaken the reader's fear and loathing. According to Söderhjelm, the extraordinary number of disgusting

episodes is, strangely enough, not all together perceived as embarrassing, since they are subordinated to a "poetic necessity"("poetiska nödvändighet") namely to show the hopelessness in human life when man is no better than he is. *Sanctuary* is thus carried by a "bitter melancholy" ("bitter melankoli"), a need to free oneself from the repulsive, thus giving the novel a "moral and poetic strength" ("moralisk och poetisk styrka"). There is in this novel a strong sensitivity "for all those human values that brutality, heartlessness, and cowardice trample in the dirt" ("för alla de mänskliga värden, som råhet, hjärtlöshet och feghet trampa i stoftet"). Söderhjelm concluded that *Sanctuary* is a very gruesome book indeed, but that it is "neither humanly nor poetically indifferent" ("varken mänskligt eller poetiskt likgiltig"). Returning to Faulkner in an extensive article in the same newspaper in 1935, now reviewing *Doctor Martino and other Stories* (1934) and the novel *Pylon* (1935), Söderhjelm repeated that although it might be easy to object to Faulkner's narrative world with its strong inclination for "the macabre, the disgusting, the repulsive" ("det makabra, det vidriga, det ruskiga") (Söderhjelm 1935), he found Faulkner constantly fascinating and with a supreme artistic command of his material.

André Malraux's preface to the French translation of *Sanctuary* in 1933, which was also published separately in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* the same year, came to be an influential assessment of Faulkner in Swedish criticism as well. It was subsequently translated into Swedish by the leading modernist poet Gunnar Ekelöf and published in the avant-garde journal *Karavan* in 1935. Malraux famously argued that the brutality and violence that permeated the mood and drove the plot in *Sanctuary*, rendered it a "a detective-story atmosphere but without detectives" (Malraux 1952, p. 92) ("en roman i detektivmiljö men utan detektiver") (Malraux 1935, p. 95). It would however, according to Malraux, be pointless to read the novel simply according to the detective novel structure. It is, rather, the ethical implications of the plot that really mattered: "Taken by itself, the plot would be only a sort of chess game, an artistic failure. The plot is important in that it is the most efficient way of revealing an ethical or poetic fact in its greatest intensity." (Malraux 1952, p. 92) ("Hänvisad till sig själv skulle intrigen vara av samma art som schackspelet: konstnärligt intetsägande. Dess betydelse kommer av att den är det verksammaste medlet att med all dramatisk intensitet framställa ett etiskt eller poetiskt faktum.") (Malraux 1935, p. 95). Malraux related Faulkner to a fundamental "psychological state" ("ett psykologiskt tillstånd") which underlies all tragic art and which the writer becomes addicted to as if using a drug, a psychological need: "The tragic poet expresses what obsesses him, not to exorcize the obsession (the obsessive object will appear in his next work), but to change its nature: for, by expressing it with other elements, he makes the obsession enter the relative universe of things he has conceived and dominated. He does not defend himself against anguish by expressing it, but by expressing something else with it, by bringing it back into the universe. The deepest form of obsession, that of the artist, derives its strength from being both horror and the possibility of conceiving horror." (Malraux 1952, p. 94) ("Den tragiske diktaren uttrycker det varav han är besatt, inte för att befria sig från det (ty föremålet för hans besatthet återvänder i nästa arbete) men för att ändra dess karaktär, ty när han uttrycker det med andra element för han också in det i de tänkta och behärskade tingens relativa värld. Han försvarar sig inte mot ångesten genom att uttrycka den men genom att uttrycka någonting annat med den som medel, genom att återinföra den i verkligheten. Den djupaste besattheten, nämligen konstnärens, hämtar sin kraft ur den omständigheten att den på samma gång är skräcken som sådan och möjligheten att fatta denna skräck.") (Malraux 1935, p. 97f). From the psychological viewpoint of the writer's constant wrestling with this unstilled desire, his obsession with horror and violence, Malraux reached the conclusion: "*Sanctuary* is the intrusion of Greek tragedy into the detective story." (Malraux 1952, p. 94) ("*Sanctuary* är den grekiska tragediens våldgästning hos detektivromanen.") (Malraux 1935, p. 98). Swedish criticism picked up on Malraux' analysis, in particular his notion of Faulkner as a tragic writer in need of expressing his and his characters' fated "obsession" ("besatthet") with violence and destruction.

The critic Knut Jaensson referred to Malraux's preface to *Sanctuary* in two extensive articles on Faulkner in 1935 in the daily *Social-Demokraten*. He interpreted Faulkner's narrative objectivity and unwillingness to step forward to explain and ensure himself of the reader's agreement as an expression

of the author's moral pride. Jaensson detected a basic "unwillingness to negotiate" ("obenägenhet att förhandla") (Jaensson 1935a) in order to please the reader and make him or her agree. Naturally, Faulkner wants to be understood, but the critic underlined that this must not be realized through clarifications simply for the sake of it. He referred to Malraux's foreword to the French translation of *Sanctuary* and maintained that Faulkner first and foremost creates "scenes" and stands out as a "dramatist" ("scener"; "dramatiker") (Jaensson 1935a). Jaensson's main purpose is to explain and defend Faulkner's norm-breaking art and expose those readings that emerge as offended by his anti-traditional, modernist address. With regard to the morally distraught reactions by some Swedish critics, Jaensson claimed: "It often turns out that one was not upset on behalf of the work of art: the uneasiness one felt towards Faulkner's novels was of the same kind that one would have felt towards many of the classics—before they became classics. That is the peculiar thing with contemporaneity and distance." ("Men det visar sig ofta att det inte var å konstens vägar man var upprörd: det obehag man kände inför så många av klassikerna—innan de blev klassiker. Det är nu en gång det egendomliga med samtidigheten och avståndet.") (Jaensson 1935a). According to Jaensson's analysis, there are two basic misunderstandings in Swedish Faulkner-reception. If one for some reason worships brutality, one could imagine having a sympathizer in Faulkner. If one, on the other hand, shudders from or shuts one's eyes to human forces that are too strong and primordial to be turned into normal decency, one could imagine Faulkner to be a representative of cold cynicism, brutal indifference, or pure sadism. Each of them is equally false. The naïve and dull-witted lack the capacity to discover Faulkner's exquisite sense of moral nuances. In Faulkner's proud and artistically effective omission of explanations and expositions, they simply find evidence of his insensitivity and brutality, the critic contends in defense of Faulkner. The author is seemingly fascinated by "brutal environments and men of action, that is his 'romanticism', but it is complicated and lacks banality" ("brutala miljöer och handlingsmänniskor, det är hans 'romantik', men den är komplicerad och den saknar banalitet"), Jaensson (1935b) points out.

In Artur Lundkvist's seminal collection of essays on international modernism, *Ikarus' flykt* (1939, The Flight of Icarus), the impact of Malraux' foreword to *Sanctuary* is clearly in evidence. Lundkvist's chapter on Faulkner is a commentary on Faulkner's entire *œuvre* up until *The Unvanquished* (1938). For its time, it displays a remarkable insight into Faulkner's writings, where Lundkvist takes the role of loyal introducer. On a few introductory and concluding pages Lundkvist lays bare the general characteristics of Faulkner's aesthetics; in between, he presents a running commentary on each of the novels in chronological order. Lundkvist's critical style can best be described as an impressionistic paraphrase of the plot of the novels. His critical language does not shy away from similes and metaphors, and moves forward in an emotionally intense style. In a sense, Lundkvist re-presents the object-text whereby his critical presentation and interpretation are given literary quality. The long chapter on Faulkner, which is significantly entitled "Faulkner: The Defeated" ("Faulkner, den besegrade") returns to and varies a thematic complex of defeat, determinism, fate, and tragedy. Like Malraux, Lundkvist compares Faulkner to Edgar Allan Poe, an "engineer of horror" ("skräckens ingenjör") with his "obsessed fantasy and cold, calculating technique" ("fantasibesatthet och kallt beräknande teknik") (Lundkvist 1939b, p. 121). True to his inner inclinations and the obscure laws of his own being, Faulkner has, according to Lundkvist, created "a form of obsession, a medium of horror and tragedy" ("en besatthetens form, ett skräckens och tragediens medium") (Lundkvist 1939b, p. 121). Obviously inspired by Malraux, Lundkvist on several occasions anchored the determinism that he found in Faulkner's narrative in Greek tragedy. As in Malraux, *Sanctuary* reminded Lundkvist in its formal construction of "a detective novel, but the key to the development is less of a surface phenomenon than a psychological one" (" en detektivroman, men händelsenyckeln är mindre av yttre art än av psykologisk") (Lundkvist 1939b, p. 132).

Returning for a moment to the introduction of this article and my general remarks, it should be emphasized that a basic feature of Faulkner's experimental novels is the identification of form with content. Content lies in the form. What is told is no doubt important, but most important is

how it is told. If Faulkner's style seems complicated, it is because what he is trying to say is just as complicated. Strictly speaking, it is this inseparability and weaving together of form and content that much of Swedish Faulkner criticism circles around and tries to address. The reactions to *Sanctuary* are cases in point. The reviewers and critics use a critical language that is interspersed with generic comparisons—film, montage, camera positions, tragedy, drama, scenes—to capture the experimental form of the novel. Its content is often evaluated and sometimes rejected on moral and ethical grounds. A particular problem from the point of view of reception history is the critics' handling of "the author's" presence or absence in the novel. Objectivity, distance, and indifference are critical concepts that are used by Faulkner critics and reviewers in order to come to terms with what literary theory decades later referred to as the tradition of the "exit author" in the modern novel (Booth 1961, part III). From a moralizing standpoint, some reviewers (Selander, Österling, and Söderhjelm) criticized the lack of moral clarity from "the author" with regard to the violent, gruesome, and harsh world that his novels depict. On the other hand, a critic like Knut Jaensson detected a moral pride in Faulkner's objectivity and unwillingness to come forward and negotiate with the reader. As I will show, the issue of 'Faulkner's stance' vis-à-vis the narrated world becomes acute in the critical reception of *Light in August*.

3. Narrative Technique versus Ideology: The Reception of the Swedish Translation of *Light in August* (1944)

As we have seen, Faulkner first entered the Swedish cultural scene at the beginning of the 1930s, and his presence in Swedish letters gradually increased during the decade through introductory articles and essays. But it is not until the middle of the 1940s that one can speak of a breakthrough, when *Light in August* was the first novel translated into Swedish (by the poet Erik Lindegren), and was given considerable attention by critics and reviewers. Lindegren was engaged in translating *Light in August* already in 1937, although it was not published until 1944 (Lysell 1983, p. 37). The novel was highly praised as a modernist masterwork, but it was also criticized for what some critics perceived to be its ideological obscurity and lack of clarity in moral questions. It generated a heated debate about ideology and aesthetics in literature.

In his autobiography from 1966, Artur Lundkvist wrote that Erik Lindegren, an influential critic and seminal modernist poet during the 1940s, on his own initiative and out of pure pleasure, made a translation of Faulkner's *Light in August*, feeling a kinship with the desperate tone of the book. According to Lundkvist, Lindegren and himself at the time found common ground in passionate discussions of Faulkner's early masterpieces *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*[1] (Lundkvist 1966, p. 147).

When Erik Lindegren's translation of *Light in August* appeared in 1944, it was generally regarded as an important literary event by leading reviewers and critics. Two main aspects of Faulkner's art caught critics' attention: his narrative technique and the ideology of cruelty and violence that was perceived to permeate the entire novel. The assessment of this ideological aspect became a touchstone for many critics. It obviously left no one indifferent, and encouraged a heated ideological discussion among critics (Jansson 1998, pp. 110–24). The underlying questions seemed to be: what kind of worldview does this novel express, and how should it be evaluated?

From the general point of view of reception theory, it could be argued that the nature of the norm-breaking and provocative aspects of *Light in August* were concretized via literary reviews and criticism. The literary text appeared as a challenge, provocation, and question to which the critical reaction provided an answer. The critical texts and reviews themselves are reader reactions and

[1] In 1943, Lindegren published an article on *As I Lay Dying* naming "the grotesque" ("grotesken") as the characteristic feature of the novel. He situated *As I Lay Dying* in a long tradition with its roots in ancient folkloristic expressions comparing it to "an ecstatic hot ensemble, a medieval death dance" ("en extatisk hotensemble, en medeltida dödsdans") (Lindegren 1943, p. 580).

evaluative products of a certain historical context that is determined by its "horizon of expectations", the criteria which readers use to judge literary texts in any given period. As Hans Robert Jauss emphasized, each age interprets and reinterprets literature in the light of its own knowledge and experience, its own cultural environment. The literary value and artistic character of a work are measured according to the "aesthetic distance", the degree to which a work departs from the horizon of expectations of its readers (Jauss 1982, p. 25). A closer look at Swedish criticism enables us to take stock of this distance.

In the leading conservative daily newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*, the critic Sten Selander, who previously had been highly critical of *Sanctuary* on moral grounds, considered *Light in August* a masterpiece with regard to its narrative technique, but claimed that the writer hid behind "an ice cold, unemotional formal objectivity" ("en iskall, känslolöst refererande objektivitet") (Selander 1944). The reviewer finds no empathy from "Faulkner" for the degraded "negro" characters in the novel; instead, there is only contempt or an indifferent disgust. Faulkner's novel is regarded by the critic as a falsification of reality in that it only portrays man's animalistic side. Writing has ethical and social aspects, Selander argued, and should not be limited to its aesthetic domain, in which case it risks being reduced to an empty and meaningless, however brilliant, display of form. He urges that Faulkner's worldview must not be taken as the last and unchallenged word on human life and existence, since "looking deeply, the difference between this worldview and the one dominating SS and Gestapo is non-existent" ("skillnaden mellan denna världssyn och den som behärskar SS och Gestapo är djupare sett ingen").

The left-wing critic and academic Stig Ahlgren, who in *Afton-Tidningen* was very appreciative of the novel, also discussed the relationship between ideology and narrative technique. He emphasized the determinism that governs the fate of the protagonist Christmas. Faulkner has "frozen his indignation to ice" ("frusit sin indignation till is") (Ahlgren 1944) and relates with an "absolute lack of compassion" ("absolut brist på medkänsla") the kind but awkward and failed attempts to gain Christmas's trust. Faulkner has staked out an absolutely straight path for Christmas, from his birth in agony to the murder that crowns his tragic life. Ahlgren emphasized that Faulkner's explanation for this tragic destiny does not lie in any notion of "elementary racial separation" ("elementär rasklyvnad") of the kind that permeates certain obscure theories to be found in the American South. Instead, he stressed the universality in this tragic destiny and sees it as an image of man on his unavoidable path to new defeats between the wars.

Like many other critics, the literary historian and left-wing critic Axel Strindberg in *Arbetet* praised Faulkner's narrative technique and the complicated formal innovations that radically broke with a previous, chronologically straight and simple way of narrating. He characterized *Light in August* as "a scenic novel set in the present" ("en scenroman i presens") (Strindberg 1944) as opposed to an older type of novel using the past tense and evenly sweeping over decades in its narrative flow. In order to elucidate and analyze the problem of good and evil, Faulkner uses the racial conflict, but the critic senses that Faulkner has got stuck somewhere in the argumentative chain of racial prejudices, perverse sexuality, and sadistic puritanism. Indeed, Faulkner does not react against the brutality, but still has a tendency to regard it as self-evident, Strindberg objects. He is not opposed to Faulkner's dark and pessimistic world view as such, but claims that he is "emotionally unclear on a very vital issue: the question of violence" ("känslomässigt oklar i en mycket vital angelägenhet: i fråga om våldet").

The theme of violence is again brought up by Anna Lenah Elgström, the only female critic to review the novel, in a review significantly enough entitled "Literary fascism?" ("Litterär fascism?") in *Morgon-Tidningen*. Faulkner's writing is said to represent man's instinctual drive, the darker side of life. As Elgström saw it, the literary and ideological background to Faulkner's novel is to be found in the amoral aggressiveness that is characteristic of Italian futurism and subsequently incorporated into the political program of the fascist revolt. Another ideological strand that she reckoned with is the Nazi mystique of blood and race. The critic claimed that Faulkner seems to emphasize the aesthetic aspect of this ideological complex, and completely relieves his prose of emotions and affects and in

a pale light renders the slightest nuances of visual reality in an absolutely new and fascinating way. Faulkner represents "the cold-hearted primitivism" ("den kallhjärtade primitivismen") (Elgström 1944) within modern literature, showing a tendency to an aesthetic mechanism that treats the characters as marionettes. He has obviously gained a lot of followers and admirers among young Swedish writers, but there is, according to Elgström, a danger in following a literary trend characterized not only by an "aestheticizing primitivism, but also by a cult of instinct and death" ("estetiserande primitivism men också av drifts- och dödskult"). In her moralistic message, the critic claimed that in a time ravaged by war, there are fundamental human values that must be safeguarded and defended. Faulkner is obviously not to be counted among its defenders.

Per Olov Zennström reviewed the novel in the communist daily newspaper *Ny Dag*. In opposition both to ardent admirers of a literary style that is supposed to reveal the truth about the world and those that are equally fascinated and appalled by Faulkner's worldview, Zennström found it necessary with a "sociological anchoring" ("sociologisk förankring") (Zennström 1944) of Faulkner's writing. Zennström rejected what he perceived to be Faulkner's pessimistic worldview. The novel plays out against a largely "deformed image of social reality" ("vanställda bild av den sociala verkligheten"). It bears witness to a "parasitic, hostile attitude to life and development"("en parasitär, livsoduglig och utvecklingsfientlig åskådning"). As with other reviewers, he held Faulkner accountable for the disquieting mentality the literary characters are said to represent. According to Zennström's ideology critique, literary value can be judged with regard to its hypothetical consequences, that which he sees as its objective effects. Valuable literature conveys an edifying influence on the reader, which Faulkner's novel falls short of doing. Consequently, it is the Marxist demand for intentionality that underlies the critic's argument.

Jöran Mjöberg is a reviewer who in *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten* (Mjöberg 1944) explicitly took issue with those who criticized Faulkner's alleged tendency towards violence and cruelty and drew parallels to the mentality of contemporary oppressors and their inclination toward violence. Indeed, this is an absurd argument, since Faulkner constantly demonstrates the evil consequences of man's actions. It is "the artistic shape and form, not the tendency for good or evil that should determine the assessment of a writer" ("det är den konstnärliga gestaltningen, inte tendensen till gott eller ont som måste avgöra omdömet om en diktare"), Mjöberg argued.

The editor of *Göteborgs Morgonpost*, the conservative critic Sanfrid Neander-Nilsson, argued that since Joe Christmas' split consciousness derives from "a drop of negro blood" ("en droppe negerblod") (Neander-Nilsson 1944) running in his veins, and since this causes his tragic destiny, Faulkner displays a thinking equivalent to the racial theories of the Nazi regime, even though he himself is unaware of it. *Light in August* is seen as an example of cold and heartless "hardboiled modern literature" ("den hårdkokta moderna litteraturen"), governed by a biblical and slave-driven moral puritanism.

The modernist poet and critic Karl Vennberg played a decisive role in the introduction of international modernism, in particular Franz Kafka, in Sweden during the 1940s. In the magazine *Vi*, he claimed that the core of Faulkner's novel lay in a fatalism that was reminiscent of the destiny-ridden ancient tragedies. The characters in Faulkner are obsessed with either good or evil as inexplicable and impersonal drives. It would be, he argued, a simplification to regard Christmas's crime as simply socially determined and with race or environment as conclusive explanations. Instead, Christmas himself seeks severity and punishment and is a criminal who "lives exclusively in his guilt, and for that reason fears compassion like a death threat" ("som inte lever annat än i sin skuld och därför fruktar medlidandet som ett dödshot"), and therefore, his crime simply becomes "a symptom, guilt's defiant searching out of its punishment" ("ett symptom, ett skuldens trotsiga uppsökande av sitt straff") (Vennberg 1944, p. 14). Vennberg argued that Christmas's experience of life's tragic dualism is so absolute that it requires a purely metaphysical explanation.

The comparison with Greek tragedy also crops up in Gunnar Ekelöf's review of the translation in the magazine *BLM*. As we have seen, Ekelöf was an ardent reader of Faulkner, and had played an

important role in the history of Faulkner reception with the translation in 1935 of André Malraux's foreword to the French translation of *Sanctuary* in the magazine *Karavan*.

Ekelöf in 1944 remarked that Faulkner obviously has the power to arouse indignation and deep anxiety. In the Swedish debate about *Light in August*, many critics tried to discredit Faulkner's greatness as a writer, Ekelöf observed, and he conceded that it is not always easy to get a clear grip of the characters and their function in the course of events. He relied on Malraux's comparison with the classic Greek tragedy and claimed that Faulkner, without explicitly saying so, sometimes speaks in the name of the choir, and sometimes in the name of the characters. This in turn forced the reader to question his or her own reaction to the characters and their actions, since Faulkner's narrative method leaves the reader free to either grin at or agonize over the violence and atrocities. Ekelöf claimed that this indeed is a more formidable challenge than if the writer had drawn out the consequences and indicated for the reader the 'proper' reaction. Faulkner's strength is his "tragic objectivity—in the classical sense" ("hans tragiska objektivitet—i antik mening"). He never steps forward as "the writer (i.e., the explicator)" ("som författaren (dvs. förklararen)") (Ekelöf 1944, p. 909), but rather stages a tragedy.

Ekelöf's reasoning stands out as remarkably clear-sighted for its time when it comes to the crucial question of the writer's authority and presence in the text. It actually anticipated the problem of impersonal narration and its implicit effect on the reader. The shifting point of view and the uncertainty about the author's authority led Ekelöf to raise the question of the narrative voice and its potential status. Problems like these were later to form the nucleus within the so-called exit author tradition in modern narratology. What Ekelöf perceived as Faulkner's objective narrative raised the questions: who speaks, and where is 'the author' within this spectrum of different voices in the novel? It is according to him the narrative uncertainty in itself that is the basic characteristic of Faulkner's novel. Moreover, Ekelöf from this standpoint criticized the prevalent misinterpretations of the novel by other reviewers. If 'the author' is held responsible for celebrating violence and heralding a contemptuous ideology, it is nothing less than a gross simplification. Since Faulkner does not come forth as author explaining to the reader how to relate to the 'objective' narrative, the reader is presented with particular difficulties. Ekelöf maintained that the challenges are the shifting perspectives and the importance that the reader assigns to them when interpreting the contents of the narrative. The basic problem underlying Ekelöf's argument concerns the lack of authorial authority and a final guarantor of meaning.

To summarize, the ideological and moralizing readings of *Light in August* focus on the racial problem and the inclination for violence and death permeating the course of action. Some reviewers interpret the text as implicitly representing a racial biology reminiscent of Nazi ideology. Others emphasize that Faulkner's sophisticated narrative technique leaves it to the readers to find the moral and ideological implications of the story and in the process to scrutinize their own moral positions and worldviews. Critics like Mjöberg, Vennberg, and Ekelöf do not demand that 'the author' should come forth, give directions, and take a stand in the moral question of good and evil. It should also be noted that although all of the critics discussed Faulkner's innovative technique to a lesser or greater extent, none of them actually termed it 'modernist' or 'modernism'.

4. Critical 'Misreadings', Meaning, and Significance

To further elucidate the hermeneutical problems and misconceptions in the critical debate 1944, I find support in some observations by the Faulkner commentator François Pitavy on the novel itself. Faulkner leaves Joe Christmas's origins in doubt, which means that the racial problem becomes an internal one. The novel is deliberately unclear on a central issue with relevance for the critical discussion among Swedish reviewers and critics: Christmas's origin. He does not know who he is, but claims he is not a "nigger", and is then told: "You are worse than that. You dont know what you are. And more than that, you wont never know. You'll live and you'll die and you wont never know [. . .]." (Faulkner [1932] 1978, p. 288) ("Du är värre. Du vet inte vad du är. Och du får aldrig veta det. Du får leva och dö utan att veta det.") (Faulkner 1944, p. 294). It is this uncertainty that drives Joe into his

violent search for an identity and subsequent isolation. Therefore, Pitavy argued, his tragic destiny becomes a perfect illustration of the devastating effects of racism in man's consciousness, since he in fact is black only in his own mind, and he comes to believe this because it is what others believe of him (Pitavy 1973, p. 95). Although Christmas never really knows whether or not he has "negro blood", as soon as Brown declares that he has, nobody in Jefferson doubts it, not even Hightower at first. Once they believe it, he becomes a "negro" in their eyes, and they consequently treat him as such. The community needs a scapegoat, and that this should be a "negro" is reassuring: the ritual punishment purges the white community after the threat to its integrity and confirms the code for and by which it lives (Pitavy 1973, p. 94). Thus, in showing how the anguish torturing Christmas is above all the poisoning of his consciousness caused by the idea that other people have of him, Faulkner exposes the very essence of racism in a radical way, and without any sentimentality or idealism. In this way, Faulkner effectively demonstrates that the biological traits are secondary and literally superficial (Pitavy 1973, p. 95). This is where several Swedish critics go wrong in their assessment of Faulkner's so-called heartlessness, his ice-cold indifference, and his lack of emotion.

I would furthermore suggest that the critical misconceptions of the moral and ideological aspects of the novel could be clarified with regard to the distinction between meaning and significance. The reviewers present critical interpretations of the literary text that are concretizations of their readings in the specific historical situation in which the readers, reviewers, and critics find themselves.

E.D. Hirsch used the term "meaning" for the verbal meaning of the text, and "significance" for the textual meaning in relation to a larger context, i.e., another era or time, a wider subject matter, an alien system of values. According to Hirsch, "significance" is meaning as related to some context, indeed any context, beyond itself (Hirsch 1976, p. 2f). When we are dealing with the interpretations, moralizing and ideological value judgments in Swedish criticism, they should be seen as hermeneutical applications of the text's "significance". Hirsch further clarified that "meaning" is "meaning-for-an-interpreter", and this could equal the author's original meaning, or it could be anachronistic. According to Hirsch, meaning in this sense comprises constructions where authorial will is partly or totally disregarded. He maintained that the important feature of meaning as distinct from significance is that meaning is the determinate representation for an interpreter. An interpreted text is always taken to represent something, but the something can always be related to something else. Thus, significance is "meaning-as-related-to-something-else". Consequently, Hirsch regarded meaning as a principle of stability in an interpretation, while significance comprises a principle of change. Therefore, he continued, meaning-for-an-interpreter can stay the same, although the meaningfulness or significance of that meaning can change with the changing contexts in which that meaning is applied (Hirsch 1976, p. 79f). He argued that the hermeneutical debate over original and anachronistic meaning fails to distinguish between meaning and significance in that two different concepts are given the same name (Hirsch 1976, p. 85).

Referring to Hirsch in this modest context is not meant to open up a wide-ranging discussion of hermeneutics in general, but rather to elucidate the hermeneutical aspects of the Swedish interpretations of Faulkner. Interpretative debates often result in disagreements over the proper emphasis of an interpretation, Hirsch declared. Whether it is better to explain the original meaning or to try and bring out some aspect of the significance of that meaning is a question for the interpreter himself or for present-day readers (Hirsch 1976, p. 88). For ethical reasons, Hirsch argued that unless there is a powerful overriding value in disregarding an author's intention—original meaning—the professional interpreter should not disregard it (Hirsch 1976, p. 90). In ethical terms then, he concluded that original meaning is the "best" meaning (Hirsch 1976, p. 92).

I find Hirsch's distinction between meaning and significance directly applicable to the interpretative activities among Swedish reviewers in 1944. Thus, when some critics suggested that *Light in August* is an expression of a racial biology reminiscent of or equivalent to the Nazi ideology, that is from a hermeneutical point of view to be regarded as an interpretation of the text's significance, i.e., the text is related to something other than its original context, in this case a hideous ideology

and value system brought to the fore by historical circumstances at the time of the Swedish reception. This application of the text's significance is furthermore directly opposed to the text's verbal meaning, since the text in itself, as we noted, does not represent an ideology that is supportive of racial biology; rather it deconstructs the horrible effects of it. In fact, since the novel in itself is deliberately unclear on a central issue—Joe Christmas's origins—it could be argued that the novel invalidates such an interpretation and refutes its critics. But in principle, it is of course a perfectly legitimate and self-evident activity of literary reviewers at any given point in time to present interpretations of the *significance* of literary works within a current historical context, even though these interpretations do not have to coincide with the text's verbal *meaning*. This hermeneutical distinction also of course relates to the incontrovertible historical fact that Faulkner's novel, which originally appeared in 1932, predates the outbreak of WWII by seven years. The assertions of some Swedish critics in 1944 that the novel recalls a Nazi-esque ideology is obviously inaccurate from a strictly chronological point of view. The distinction between meaning and significance elucidates the hermeneutical implications inherent in this chronological and historical anomaly.

5. The Foreword as Paratext

Light in August was translated by Erik Lindegren in 1944. However, the preface was not written by him, but rather by Anders Österling, a poet and critic from an older generation, who had already written about Faulkner in 1933. Österling was not averse to modernist literature and gradually came to accept and appreciate modernist literature and promote some of its most prominent international representatives. At the time of writing the preface for the translation of Faulkner's novel, he was a well-known and respected poet and critic of a moderately traditional standing, and also the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, the institution that was to award Faulkner the Nobel Prize for literature six years later.

Österling's short preface, which is two and a half pages long, is curiously indecisive in its appreciation of Faulkner. In this, it echoes Österling's sentiments and indeed some of his wordings from his Faulkner article in 1933. The preface writer begins by noticing that Faulkner is the most discussed American writer at the present time. He found the first impression of Faulkner's circle of motifs undoubtedly "repulsive" ("frånstötande") (Österling 1944, p. 5), and the reader is wise to arm himself with a great deal of courage to be able to confront this side of American mentality. In a short biographical sketch Österling, like many other critics, passed on the biographical myth that Faulkner crashed his airplane and suffered a foot injury while on military service in World War I. The war trauma damaged him psychologically and led to a kind of "cold observing indifference" and "cruel callousness" ("kallt observerande likgiltighet"; "grym förhärdelse") (Österling 1944, p. 5) regarding terror and death. Therefore, Faulkner was said to be able to depict any scene whatsoever without being revolted by its gruesomeness. Österling related some of the main events of the novel's "story" ("berättelsen") and claimed that Faulkner works with a complicated "plot" ("komposition") (Österling 1944, p. 6). He uses a fragmented chronology and works backward in time from Christmas's murder of Joanna Burden, which is presented early in the novelistic plot, to Christmas's manic state of mind before the murder and then further into his past. Österling did not have recourse to theoretical concepts such as 'story' and 'plot', but to characterize Faulkner's narrative technique, he distinguished between two narrative levels that could in fact be labelled with these terms. He then presented a psychological interpretation of Joe Christmas's character that Faulkner is said to portray with brilliant intuition. Christmas personifies the "depravity" and "degeneration" ("urartning"; "degeneration") (Österling 1944, p. 6) of the southern environment with which Faulkner has a love–hate relationship. When Joanna Burden takes pity on Christmas, it only increases his desperation, which, in Österling's interpretation, leads to his murdering her "to avoid crying over himself" ("slippa gråta över sig själv") (Österling 1944, p. 6). Without being able to "think or feel" ("tänka eller känna"), Christmas develops an increased vitality that seems to have fascinated Faulkner, the critic presumed. Using a figurative wording, he described Christmas's sneaking movements "like a feline from the jungle" ("som ett

kattdjur från djungeln") (Österling 1944, p. 6), and sees in him man as predator deprived of all humane characteristics. Like many other Faulkner commentators, Österling pointed to the author's reluctance to intervene and explained: "The narrator does not draw any conclusions and does not present any philosophy; his only principle seems to be to avoid sentimentality at all costs." ("Berättaren drager inga slutsatser och lägger inte fram någon filosofi; hans enda princip synes vara den att för allt i världen undvika sentimentalitet.") (Österling 1944, p. 6f). His final judgement is split. Österling found a remarkable narrative technique and a narrative temperament of unquestionable intensity, but also a rather gruesome worldview. Thus, he maintained his reservations.

The preface to the second Swedish translation of a Faulkner novel—*De obesegrade* (1948, *The Unvanquished*)—was signed by Thorsten Jonsson, and the translation was by Håkan Norlén. The year he wrote the preface, Jonsson was appointed to the post of head of the cultural section of *Dagens Nyheter*. During World War II, he had been stationed in New York as the journal's American correspondent. He was something of a connoisseur of modern American prose, and in his book *Sex amerikaner* (1942, Six Americans), he devoted a whole chapter to Faulkner. Therefore, Jonsson's knowledge of American culture and literature makes him a natural choice as preface writer to the translation of Faulkner's novel, not leastwise since he personally had met and interviewed Faulkner at his farm outside Oxford, Mississippi, for an extensive article in *Dagens Nyheter* in 1946. Jonsson's article gives a picture of the surroundings and milieu, characterizes Faulkner's demeanour, reports his—mostly critical—opinions of his American colleagues and his—occasionally self-critical—views of his own works. Jonsson deplored that Faulkner as a "difficult" ("svår") writer obviously could not afford to live from his writing: he received no federal grants, and in order to keep his farm going and be able to pay his employees, he had to resort to manuscript work in Hollywood. Jonsson found it deplorable that "one of the country's best prose writers and one of its most sensitive artistic consciences should be forced to waste himself on suchlike" ("en av landets bästa prosaister och ett av dess ömtåligaste konstnärliga samveten ska tvingas kasta bort sig på dylikt") (Jonsson 1946).

Jonsson's preface to *De obesegrade* is four and a half pages long, which is roughly the usual length of a preface of this kind. The preface writer began by observing that Faulkner was one of the best storytellers in contemporary literature, and also one of the most distinctive. In this lies the motivation for his preface: even the most conscientious reader might benefit from some explanatory remarks. Jonsson went on to place *The Unvanquished* in Faulkner's oeuvre. He was a writer who was deeply immerged in the history and traditions of the American South, with its grim and tragic memories from the civil war. Faulkner was said to be obsessed with these memories of a carefree and patriarchal past that is both attractive and dark. The slave system imprinted on him a sense of tragic guilt, and the defeat in the civil war, with its horrible bloodshed and complete impoverishment of the southern states, was for Faulkner a focal point in the insoluble conflict of a society that was unwilling to give up its appalling slave system for reasons of material benefits. Faulkner and the society that he depicted was since then borne down under a sense of inevitable defeat. From this general background, Jonsson tried to make Faulkner relevant for another place and time: post-war Europe. In a hermeneutical application, he argued that the European experience of a defeat caused by insoluble political conflicts is parallel to Faulkner's experience of the fate of the American South, even though there are other considerable cultural differences. The preface writer continued to emphasize that *The Unvanquished* treated the American civil war more directly than Faulkner's previous novels. Here, Faulkner is said to indulge in storytelling for its own sake. The biographical approach is present in that the critic related some of the characters in the novel to Faulkner himself and his family members. More importantly, with regard to Faulkner's narrative method, the preface writer explained that everything that Faulkner relates "is found within himself like a vision" ("finns inom honom själv som en vision") (Jonsson 1948a, p. 7). Faulkner does not add anything, and goes directly into his dream world, presenting its content with a richness of detail that practically overwhelms and disorients the reader. Here, as always, Faulkner's writing carries a remarkable suggestive power in its rendering of the violent and grotesque actions to which the characters are subjected. What distinguishes *The Unvanquished* from Faulkner's other

novels, Jonsson explained, is that Faulkner is unusually accommodating towards his reader, partly through the adventure plot pertaining to a certain type of war story, and partly through his abundant use of drastic comedy. There is an element of *Huckleberry Finn* in Faulkner's novel, Jonsson contended. He predicted that this quality of the novel might attract his new readers to further engagement with his earlier work.

Österling and Jonsson thus contributed two forewords to the Faulkner reception. As a text type that is principally different from, for example, reviews and book chapters, it deserves further attention. That being the case, what type of text, then, is the preface, and how does it function? According to Gérard Genette, a preface is constituted by paratextuality, liminal devices, and conventions that mediate the book to the reader. Paratexts surround, extend, and present the text and ensure its presence in the world, as well as its reception and consumption in the form of a book (Genette 1997, p. 1). The basic function of the paratext in all of its forms is, Genette declared, its auxiliary nature. It is an instance of mediation. Its sole purpose of existence is its dedication to the service of something other than itself, which is the text. The paratext as such is always subservient to its text (Genette 1997, p. 12).

A further noteworthy fact in our case is that the preface writers Österling and Jonsson were not identical to the Swedish translators of the Faulkner novels. However, they are prominent authors and critics whose names carried considerable cultural weight in Swedish literary circles at that time. In Genette's typology of prefaces, we are in these cases dealing with the allographic preface, which is characterized by a separation between the sender of the text—the author—and the sender of the preface, i.e., the preface writer (Genette 1997, p. 263). The addressee is of course the potential reader of the novel in question. One important consideration is the temporal factor, since although allographic prefaces may of course be published along with first editions, the allographic prefaces for the Swedish translations are all published later than the original texts (Genette 1997, p. 264). The basic but somewhat problematic condition for the writers of prefaces is that they offer commentaries on texts that are as yet unfamiliar to the readers (Genette 1997, p. 237). This condition is likely to predispose and circumscribe the preface in certain ways, for example when it comes to revealing the details of the plot in order to not spoil the reader's experience. On the other hand, this basic preface condition also comprises expectations as to what could be included in order to facilitate the reader's understanding of the novel. For example, the laying out of the novel's most important themes and motifs, a characterization of the narrative technique, a placing of the novel in the author's entire *oeuvre*. From this point of view, Österling's preface to *Ljus i augusti* with its indecisiveness and objection to Faulkner's gruesome worldview—he literally recommended that the potential reader steel himself against the mentality in question—stands out as something of an anomaly. With regard to the preface as mediator between text and reader, Österling's strong repudiation of Faulkner's worldview as "repulsive" ("frånstötande"), could of course, for just that reason, have the effect of attracting readers to the book. Jonsson's preface to *De obesegrade* appears as more conventional in tone as well as content. In our context, Genette's remark about André Malraux's preface to the French translation of Faulkner's *Sanctuary* is particularly relevant. In the French "literary stock market", according to Genette, Faulkner's intellectual price for some time owed a great deal to Malraux's well-known phrase about "the intrusion of Greek tragedy into the detective story" (Genette 1997, p. 270). As I have shown, the same could be said about Faulkner's stock on the Swedish literary market in the 1930s and 1940s, where literary critics and reviewers often found critical support in Malraux's preface, and indeed, the very translation of it bears witness to its importance in the Swedish context.

6. Faulkner's 'War Wound' as Biographeme and Critical Cliché

The dichotomy and interrelationship of life and art, biography and critical interpretation, is ubiquitous in Faulkner's fictional writing and in the critical writings about his life and work. The Faulkner scholar James G. Watson elucidated the biographical and fictional intricacies with the concepts "self-presentation" and "performance": "Self-presentation and performance are manifested in Faulkner's life in his regularly putting himself forward in the guises and disguises of a

moment—gentleman dandy, soldier, and farmer are familiar ones—as well as his art, where these and other personae are separate but interlocking elements of fictional representation. *Self-presentation* in fiction is a narrative strategy that capitalizes upon the experience of the man and author, including, of course, the performative experience; *performance* is a heightened mode of written expression, a means by which the self and all other selves, situations, and events of a book can be represented. If self-presentation is a *record* of a life and time, performance is the *act* of its recording." (Watson 2000, p. 5). Watson's useful distinctions are here brought to the fore with regard to Faulkner's famous and infamous 'war wound', which is a self-presentation that he staged with great conscientiousness the years after World War I.

Panthea Reid laid out the basic biographical background to Faulkner's alleged 'war wound' (Reid 1998, pp. 597–615). He volunteered for flight training, but was rejected by the Army's Air Corps due to his height: he was just over five feet tall, and thus too short. Finally, due to lower standards of education and physique, Faulkner was accepted in the Canadian branch of the Royal Air Force and trained in Toronto from mid-summer 1918. When the armistice arrived on 11 November, he was one week short of completing ground school. When Faulkner arrived home, according to Reid, probably without ever having flown and most certainly not piloted a plane, he was wearing a second lieutenant's uniform with "wings" indicating he had completed pilot training and a cap signifying overseas service. Furthermore, he leaned on a cane and was walking with a limp. Subsequently, the limp was transformed into a skull wound. Faulkner assumed the role of military hero, and even had himself photographed wearing different combinations of his military garb (Watson 2000, pp. 18–37). Faulkner claimed to have crashed in France and indeed presented himself and lived as a war hero. His act was of course, Reid argued, a way to cover up his sense of failure and loss from disgrace to heroism: a thematic cluster that was eventually to be transformed in his fiction.

With regard to the Swedish reception history, one is struck by the recurring references to Faulkner's participation in WWI, the war wound that he is said to have suffered, and the formative importance that it is deemed to have had on his life and writing. This biographical circumstance (pseudo-biographical) obviously had an extraordinary suggestive force and explanatory power in Swedish criticism where it was constantly repeated and gradually reached the status of a stock reference. I propose to treat this circumstance as a *biographeme* in Roland Barthes's sense. Barthes imagined how the life of a writer could be reduced "to a few details, to a few tastes, to a few inflections, let us say: 'biographemes', whose distinction and nobility could travel outside any destiny and come to touch [. . .] some future body" (Barthes [1971] 1976, p. 9). The biographeme could be understood as the minimal unit of biographical discourse (Gallop 2011, p. 44ff). It is these biographical details and inflections, this biographeme, that like a magnet catches the critics' attention. The biographeme is reiterated again and again in the critical material from 1932 to 1950, as we have already noted, and is interpreted in the same psychologizing way: Faulkner's war trauma is a basic cause for his particular outlook on life and the narrative temperament that is expressed in his novels. My aim is here to underline how this biographeme is consolidated when it is furthered in two different Swedish book chapters on Faulkner at the beginning of the 1940s and furthermore to point to one of its American sources.

Already in *Ikarus' flykt* (1939, The Flight of Icarus) in his Faulkner chapter, Lundkvist highlighted Faulkner's alleged participation in WWI: "He was present at the Western front; he is supposed to have crashed with his plane a couple of times. And he returned as a defeated man [. . .]." ("Han var med vid västfronten; och han lär ha störtat med sin maskin ett par gånger. Och han återvände som en slagen man [. . .].") (Lundkvist 1939b, p. 116). Two years later, Lundkvist published a book-length introduction of modern American literature—*Diktare och avslöjare i Amerikas moderna litteratur* (1942, Writers and debunkers in modern American literature)—which also contained a short chapter on Faulkner where Lundkvist presented Faulkner as a major modern American novelist for the Swedish readership. With regard to its contents, the rather short Faulkner chapter in this book did not add significantly new insights compared to the much longer chapter on Faulkner in *Ikarus' flykt* two years earlier. However, it should be noted that Lundkvist updates his presentation, adding descriptive

paragraphs on *The Wild Palms* (1939) and *The Hamlet* (1940). On the whole, this chapter is a touched up and more easily accessible presentation of Faulkner's writing than the previous one, which was obviously aimed at a wider readership, since it was published by "Kooperativa förbundets bokförlag" (The Publishing House of the Cooperative Association). This readership was now again informed about Faulkner's participation in WWI, where he crashed and "suffered a hip injury" ("ådrog sig en höftskada") (Lundkvist 1942, p. 160) that deeply affected Faulkner and turned his existence into a "physical and psychological struggle against the pain" ("fysiskt och psykiskt en kamp mot smärtan") (Lundkvist 1942, p. 160). Lundkvist in other words detected a trauma that was channeled into Faulkner's writing, or 'sublimated' to apply a psychological term that Lundkvist did not use, but with which he undoubtedly was familiar.

Lundkvist furthermore dwelled on Faulkner's southern cultural heritage and his radical renewal of this tradition in his writing. He particularly praised his accomplished style and narrative technique with its displacements and inversions. Faulkner's literary universe is characterized as a strangely closed world, whose laws are dictated by a deterministic pattern. It was as if his characters were sleepwalking on their paths towards defeat, crime, and annihilation. Faulkner's characters are said to show "the puritan in rebellion against himself" ("puritanen i uppror mot sig själv") (Lundkvist 1942, p. 162), devastated by irreconcilable conflicts between desire and denial, the world and the ideal. However, it should be observed that Lundkvist's highly appreciative characterization of Faulkner's writing ends with a cautionary note. The danger is that Faulkner's inclination for the tragic leads to "an exaggerated melodramatic romanticism and an all too mechanical determinism" ("en överdriven melodramatisk romantik och en alltför mekanisk determinism") (Lundkvist 1942, p. 170). On occasion, he has a tendency to end up in isolated fantasy worlds that are artificial and without anchorage in reality. However, Lundkvist predicted that Faulkner in his continuous renewal would even more successfully amalgamate fantasy and reality, realism and symbolism, the tragic and the comic.

The same year as Lundkvist published his book on modern American writing, the critic Thorsten Jonson released his book *Sex amerikaner* (1942, Six Americans), which contained one chapter on William Faulkner. Jonsson had begun reading Faulkner with great enthusiasm as early as 1937 (Erixon 1994, p. 37f) and was, as we previously noted, somewhat of an authority on modern American prose writing, having translated Hemingway and Steinbeck into Swedish. Indeed, Jonsson's own prose writing displayed influences by the American 'hardboiled' style. In *Sex amerikaner*, Jonsson to a large extent paraphrased the intrigues and thematic contents of Faulkner's major novels until *The Wild Palms* (1939). In a short epilogue to this chapter, he passed on the comparison between Faulkner and Poe and Dostoyevsky that André Malraux had introduced in his preface to *Sanctuary* (1933), which was translated into Swedish in 1935. Like Lundkvist, Jonsson reiterated the myth of Faulkner's traumatic experiences from his participation in WWI where he suffered a "complicated hip injury" "en besvärlig höftskada" (Jonsson 1942, pp. 42, 76), which was a physical torment that had followed him and was perceived in his writing, in "its peculiarly hard strung rhythm" ("den egendomligt anspända rytmen"). Jonsson thus treated Faulkner's war wound as a physical and emotional trauma that was sublimated through his creative activity into literature. This is an interpretation that Jonsson shared with the American scholar Joseph Warren Beach, to whom he referred.

In *American Fiction 1920–1940* (1941), Beach began his highly appreciative chapter on Faulkner's style and narrative technique, entitled "Virtuoso", with a reference to the *biographeme* in question. There is a certain quality that goes through all of Faulkner's writing that is hard to pin down exactly: "There is a kind of cold ferocity about all his writing, a strained intensity, which makes one think of the painful state of nerves, the actual physical pain, which (according to an early sketch of Sherwood Anderson's) he used to carry with him without intermission as heritage of his flying in the First World War. It is as if whatever he does, whatever appearance he makes in the world of men, he must grit his teeth and dominate by [a] force of will pain which must otherwise make him soft, and that the personal suffering to which he will not bow was always filtering through into his general statements about human nature, giving to them a tone of suppressed rage." (Beach 1941, p. 147). On a psychological

level, Beach regarded Faulkner's war experience as having caused a specific attitude and outlook on life. Furthermore, the physical and mental trauma was sublimated during the creative process and returned in Faulkner's writing as a certain outlook on human life: a "tone" or narrative temperament.

Beach, Lundkvist, and Jonsson all handled the Faulknerian *biographeme* in the same way, and they ascribed considerable weight to it. It became an empirical foundation for a biographical and psychologizing reading of Faulkner's fiction. The biographical (and pseudo-biographical) circumstance was used as an interpretative tool that was given considerable explanatory value. The constant repetition of it during the 1930s and 1940s gradually turned it into a critical cliché.

7. Towards the End of the 1940s: *Intruder in the Dust* and "the Negro Question"

By the end of the 1940s, the pre-Nobel Prize reception reached its peak. Between 1948–1950, four Faulkner novels were translated into Swedish and duly reviewed in the press: *De obesegrade* (*The Unvanquished*) by Håkan Norlén in 1948; *Medan jag låg och dog* (*As I Lay Dying*) by Mårten Edlund in 1948; *De vilda palmerna* (*The Wild Palms*) by Mårten Edlund in 1949; and *Inkräktare i stoftet* (*Intruder in the Dust*) by Thomas Warburton in 1950. Among Swedish Faulkner translators, Mårten Edlund was the most diligent, in total translating four novels up until 1952, including *Det allraheligaste* (*Sanctuary*) in 1951 and *Själamässa för en nunna* (*Requiem for a Nun*) in 1952. In an interview from 1954 Edlund, who was a prolific translator in general, explained that Faulkner was his favourite writer to translate: "the most difficult, the most resistant and stimulating" ("den svåraste, mest motståndsrika och stimulerande"), and he continued: "To translate a book by him equals six months of nut cracking. Curse and joy. Three pages a day can be a full workload."("Att översätta en bok av honom är lika med ett halvt års nötknäpparsvit. Förbannelse och glädje. Tre sidor om dagen kan då vara en maximal arbetsprestation.") (Liffner 2013, p. 28). Edlund's painstaking work was rewarded in the sense that his two Faulkner translations before 1950 were highly praised by the critics and considered to capture Faulkner's distinctive style in a congenial way (Söderhjelm 1948; Nordberg 1948; Dickson 1948; Jonsson 1948b; Wahlund 1948; Borglund 1949; Selander 1949; Lundkvist 1949b; Brunius 1949; Carlson 1949).

Generally, Faulkner's novels were received mostly favourably in the Swedish press before the 1950s, in some cases with great acclaim, and regarded as accomplished works of art by a writer that is held to be one of the great modern novelists (Carlson 1948, 1949; Heyman 1948; Söderhjelm 1948; Nordberg 1948; Dickson 1948; Jonsson 1948b; Wahlund 1948; Borglund 1949; Selander 1949; Lundkvist 1949b; Brunius 1949). The only novel that stands out from a reception point of view is *Intruder in the Dust*, which was for political and ideological reasons. The story of Faulkner's reception history in Sweden is not complete without taking note of these critical objections.

The American edition of *Intruder in the Dust* in 1948 caused some Swedish reviewers to raise objections. Thorsten Jonsson in *Dagens Nyheter*, who previously on several occasions had praised Faulkner as one of the leading modern writers, was highly critical of Faulkner's new novel, mainly for political and ideological reasons. He argued that Faulkner used the story as a pretext "for preaching in the negro question and his own part of the country in a way a Southern senator of mediocre talent easily could have accomplished" ("för predikningar om negerfrågan och sin landsända som en medelbegåvad Sydstatssenator med lätthet skulle kunna åstadkomma") (Jonsson 1948c). The complicated tension between the North and the South that gives life to Faulkner's previous novels and enabled him to regard the tragic and grotesque pattern inherent in the South and at the same time forced him to identify with it, had in the new novel been replaced by an uncomplicated identification with the Southern states. It was, Jonsson continued, even more astonishing that Faulkner had circumvented his strong and artistically inner conflicts to seek safety in a simple political standpoint. The critic contended that there were traces of a great writer in this novel, but on the whole, *Intruder in the Dust* with its incredibly complicated sentence structures and its simplified political message was not worth the effort.

Faulkner's most ardent admirer and staunch supporter in Swedish criticism, who did more than anyone to introduce and promote his writings during the first two decades of Faulkner reception,

was Artur Lundkvist. In *Stockholms-Tidningen*, he noted that the American reception of *Intruder in the Dust* had been mixed. The novel cannot, he conceded, be regarded as one of Faulkner's most important, but it should not be considered a failure. Technically, Faulkner was said to pursue the rhetorical Southern tradition. His discourse was "highly written, consummately written" ("i högsta grad skriven, utstuderat skriven") (Lundkvist 1949a), but at the same time, it had a peculiar oral and improvised character: a stream of words flowing forth without any pauses or punctuation, filling the pages and with the odd break for a short dialogue. Lundkvist regarded this as the form that Faulkner had been heading towards for a long time. He admitted that it makes it more difficult, and at first might seem more eccentric than organic, but presumed that Faulkner here had found his real and true form. However, Lundkvist showed his scepticism to the political and ideological message in the novel. In doing this, he simplistically treated the lawyer Gavin Stevens with his long orations as the writer's "spokesperson" ("språkrör") and not as a fictive construct. Incidentally, Faulkner himself explained in an interview with Malcolm Cowley at the time that Stevens "was not speaking for the author, but for the best type of liberal Southeners; that is how they feel about the Negroes" (Polk 1978, p. 131). It is in Faulkner's suggested internal southern solution to "the negro question" ("negerfrågan") that Lundkvist detected traces of "southern fascism" ("sydstatsfascism") and also a certain naiveté with regard to its practical consequences. On the other hand, from a purely psychological point of view, Faulkner was presumed to be "on the right track" ("på rätt spår"). With regard to the central character in the novel, the formidable African American Lucas Beauchamp, Lundkvist noted "his dignity's ritual slowness" and considered him a "completely inscrutable person, surprisingly alive amidst all stylization" ("sin värdighets rituella långsamhet"; "en alldeles outgrundlig person, förvånande levande mitt i sin stilisering"). However, the critic did not enter into Beauchamp's decisive role and function in exposing the racial discourse permeating the minds of men and social life in the city of Jefferson.

Sten Selander, who was involved in the Swedish Faulkner reception from its early years in the beginning of the 1930s, in *Svenska Dagbladet* maintained that Faulkner was one of the most accomplished and purposeful writers in modern literature. His remarkable ability to capture the irrational and half-conscious that moves under the surface of the human psyche had not diminished in *Intruder in the Dust* in comparison with his previous novels. Like Lundkvist, Selander also briefly touched upon Lucas Beauchamp and underlined that Faulkner did not idealize: Beauchamp "is no Onkel Tom", and in all his eccentricity, he stood out as an "impressive figure" surrounded by a sort of "harsh comedy" ("imposant figur"; "bister komik"). However, Selander assumed that many Faulkner admirers would be disappointed by the new novel's combination of detective story and Sunday school preaching. As other critics, Selander took issue with the political aspect of the novel. It went without saying that Faulkner harboured no racial prejudices, according to the critic, but he found Faulkner's dealing with "the negro question" ("negerfrågan") (Selander 1949) less convincing. Faulkner's thesis that it was going to solve itself as long as it was left to the Southerners themselves to take care of it was hardly convincing: there were as yet no signs that this should be a workable way forward, according to the reviewer. However, the essential theme of the novel is the individual against the masses, and this is where Selander found a trace of the Sunday school story. Justice does not triumph quite so easily, he claimed. Nonetheless, what was beautifully strange and deeply interesting was Faulkner's demonstration that man—often driven by cowardice, egoism and animalistic desires—sometimes, in fact, can act in a decent way.

When the Swedish translation of *Intruder in the Dust* by Thomas Warburton appeared in 1950, Faulkner's proposed solution to "the negro question" ("negerfrågan") was once again dismissed in the press. In *Stockholms-Tidningen*, the young pro-modernist critic Bengt Holmquist in no uncertain terms criticized the reasoning and the ideology behind it as "reactionary drivel" ("reaktionärt svammel") (Holmqvist 1950a), a modernised version of century-old, outdated sociological thinking. Faulkner touched upon the idea of some sort of "'true', 'higher' freedom" ("'sann', 'högre' frihet"), and he reasoned, Holmquist claimed, almost as if he were among the theorists from the era of the

slavery. He found Faulkner the thinker, "the self-righteous Southern master" ("den egenrättfärdige sydstatspatronen"), deplorable, but Faulkner the author liberating. The critic was remarkably split in his appreciation of the novel. The young Chick Mallison's development as a human being, his relationship to his uncle Gavin Stevens, and his attainment of personal and social maturity was "a wonder of psychological close-ups, with highly effective double exposures and swift shifts in perspective" ("ett underverk av psykologisk närbildsteknik, med högeffektiva dubbelbelysningar och snabbt insatta perspektivglidningar").The critic contended that Faulkner "the author" was everything "the thinker" ("diktaren"; "tänkaren") was not: humane, open-minded, and clear-sighted. In his portrayals of human nature, Holmqvist regarded Faulkner as one of the truly great innovators in modern literature. Likewise, he held his literary style and narrative technique in the highest esteem.

On the race issue, Faulkner believed, as Noel Polk underlined, that change was inevitable and that it was in everybody's interest, blacks and whites, North and South, if white Southerners themselves effected that change and learned to live with the new social and political conditions. Gavin Stevens' problem in the novel is that he, unlike Faulkner himself, and even if he is unaware of it, is tied to the status quo. Furthermore, he is so absorbed in the abstraction of justice that he misses the concrete and is prone to talking instead of acting (Polk 1978, p. 140f). None of the Swedish critics of *Intruder in the Dust* really address the crucial circumstance that it is the final reconciliation of Stevens' idealism with Chick Mallison's realism, his actions and moral vision, that will enable society to develop in a desirable direction.

8. 1950: The Culmination Point

When Faulkner's Nobel Prize was announced in 1950, it hardly came as a surprise, and was generally regarded as a well-motivated confirmation of the exceptional artistic achievements of one of the greatest novelists in modern times. Artur Lundkvist, Bengt Holmqvist, and Sten Selander all published long articles in the daily press celebrating Faulkner's achievement. Their articles sketched the outlines of Faulkner's life, his roots in the American South and his fictional Yoknapatawpha county, characterized his major novels, his dominating, often dismal themes, not shying away from the grotesque and macabre, his penetrating psychology, his distinctive style, and his innovative narrative technique. Interestingly, in *Svenska Dagbladet*, the conservative Selander, although critical of what he regarded as commercial concessions in the short story collection *Knight's Gambit* and the gruesome worldview and appalling story in *Sanctuary*—he detected a "touch of sadism" ("ett stänk av sadism") (Selander 1950) in Faulkner's own personality—conceded and indeed emphasized that Faulkner has no competitors among his professional colleagues in America and very few in the rest of the world. His books are partly unpleasant, but it is "as Eliot says, the unpleasantness of great poetry" ("som Eliot säger, den stora litteraturens obehaglighet"). Like many other critics before him, Selander also referred to Faulkner's alleged participation in WWI, his plane crash and his "injured foot"("en skadad fot"), causing a trauma which deeply affected his life and supposedly his writing. The story was told again by the pro-modernist critic Bengt Holmqvist in his celebration of Faulkner's writings in *Stockholms-Tidningen*, where he also touched upon Faulkner's relationship to the reader. Faulkner "never works with allegory, but hands over the application of his visions to the reader. His art triumphs by its own efforts in letting the universal break through the particular." ("Faulkner arbetar aldrig allegoriskt, han överlämnar helt tillämpningen av sina syner åt läsaren. Det är hans konsts triumf att den av egen kraft låter allmängiltigheten bryta igenom det speciella.") (Holmqvist 1950b). Holmqvist declared that the prize has been awarded "not only to one of the most central literary figures between the wars but to America's most interesting writer at the present moment" ("inte bara en av mellankrigslitteraturens centralfigurer utan också Amerikas intressantaste författare i detta nu"). In *Dagens Nyheter,* Artur Lundkvist saw the Faulkner prize as a victory for the younger generation of critics, not leastwise in Europe, where he for a long time had many enthusiastic spokesmen. His American reception is said to have been more unresponsive. Lundkvist made a point of Faulkner's ideological attitude. In a certain sense, he was "a reactionary" ("en reaktionär") (Lundkvist 1950),

Lundkvist maintained, although in such a radical way that the concept became ambiguous. Faulkner was a spokesman for uncomfortable, dissentient traditions, the superseded, vanquished, and silenced. He brought to life the dead past of the American South and showed an unbroken connection to the defeated past. Lundkvist read this as Faulkner's protest against a too-fast technical–industrial development that triumphed over valuable social structures as well as human nature in "a wave of superficial money worship and far too quantitative values" ("en våg av förflackande penningdyrkan och alltför kvantitativa värderingar"). He deemed Faulkner an exceptionally worthy recipient of the Nobel Prize, "a novelist with very few equals in our time" ("en romandiktare utan många jämbördiga i vår tid").

In this brief reception history, it might be fitting to give the final word to Anders Österling, but not as a reviewer in the daily press but rather in his official capacity on the Nobel Committee. In his formal report for the Swedish Academy in 1950, Österling referred, in all honesty, to his previous doubts regarding the deeply depressive themes for which Faulkner showed a predilection. In this sense, Faulkner's lack of consolation and to some extent positive life view hardly met the requirements that were implicit in the notion of 'the ideal' for the prize. However, Österling was prepared to put this standard aside due to Faulkner's distinctive and strong artistic integrity. He concluded: "Faulkner is a master on his ground, the morbid and exuberant Southern environment he has grown up in and that keeps him enthralled. His standing in the literary world is now so established, that a distinction upon him doubtlessly would be greeted with approval both in America and Europe." ("Faulkner är en mästare på sin mark, den morbida och yppiga sydstatsmiljö som han vuxit upp i och som håller honom trollbunden. Hans ställning i den litterära världen är nu så kvalificerad, att en utmärkelse till honom skulle hälsas med bifall både i Amerika och Europa.") (Österling 1950, p. 422). Judging from the limited Swedish perspective, we have at our disposal in this article evidence that he was proven right.

9. Coda

The reception history we have been following is grounded in literary reviews, book chapters, introductory articles, and forewords. The common denominator for this body of work is 'criticism', which according to one definition is "the analysis and judgement of the merits and faults of a literary or artistic work" (Pearsall 1988, p. 435) Its etymological root is the Greek verb *krinein*, meaning "to separate, decide, judge" (Klein 1966, p. 375). The function of criticism is thus to select and judge, either to praise or dismiss, to take extreme standpoints. Literary criticism in its various forms situates a work; it ranks it and compares it to other works. To criticize is to appreciate the value of a work of art, to be engaged in an act of evaluation. An effect of this historically conditioned critical activity is that certain books or authorships over time are preserved in the collective literary consciousness and eventually are included in that continuously changing entity: the literary canon.

The criticism that we have studied is performed according to various sets of values and norms, some of which are implicit, and some of which are made explicit. The critical criteria of course varies from one critic/reviewer to another, and, as has been made clear, not all of these criteria function equally well; some are obviously more relevant and suitable than others. Qualitative judgements regarding 'novelty', 'originality', and 'complexity' have been profuse, and they adhere to the formal aspects of Faulkner's work. Whereas terms such as 'sordid', 'repulsive', and 'macabre' are judgements that are used with relevance for the contents or the worldview. Between these opposites, we have come across an array of critical judgements resulting from the critics' wrestling with Faulkner's prose and its particular challenges. The evaluations could roughly be ordered along an axis where the parameters are form and content, aesthetics and ideology, narrator and author, writer and reader. The problematics adhering to these basic parameters are of course more or less relevant for the modernist novel in general. From the limited context of Swedish Faulkner reception, it could thus be argued that Swedish criticism epitomizes and highlights the fundamental features pertaining to the notion of 'modernism', both with regard to its formal and content-based aspects.

Faulkner's Swedish reception history has not been without friction, to put it mildly. However divergent the critics and their judgments may have been, it has been obvious that Faulkner left no one indifferent. From the point of view of attracting literary attention and having an impact, it might in principle be preferable to have a negative review than no review. Silence is probably the worst fate for a writer, any writer. Faulkner has from the early 1930s stirred up emotions among critics and reviewers. Throughout his time, he was considered controversial and continuously discussed, from the first controversies in the early 1930s up until the Nobel Prize in 1950, which was the final institutionalization of Faulkner as a groundbreaking modernist writer.

In a survey of the history of the Nobel Prize in literature, Kjell Espmark entitled the period from 1946 onwards "The Pioneers", which was said to reflect a radical new policy at the Academy in comparison to the previous more populist period. Here, Faulkner falls into line with his immediate predecessors Herman Hesse, André Gide, and T.S. Eliot (Allén and Espmark 2006, pp. 30–33). By 1950, Faulker had been raised to a modernist classic. His writings had been selected, judged, ranked, and compared to others—which in essence is also an act of 'criticism'.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Article

The Reception of the Swedish Retranslation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (2012)

Elisabeth Bladh

Department of languages and literatures, University of Gothenburg, 414 61 Gothenburg, Sweden; elisabeth.bladh@sprak.gu.se

Received: 31 July 2019; Accepted: 14 August 2019; Published: 30 August 2019

Abstract: This article focuses on how the second Swedish translation of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* (2012) was received by Swedish critics. The discussion of the translation is limited to a number of paratextual features that are present in the translation, including a lengthy postscript, and to the translation's reviews in the daily press. The release of the second Swedish translation was a major literary event and was widely covered in national and local press. Literary critics unanimously welcomed the retranslation; praising the translator's raw, vulgar and physical language, his humour, and the musicality of his expression. Regarding its layout, title, and style, the new translation is closer to the original than the first translation from 1946 (revised in 1993). The postscript above all emphasizes the humanistic value of Joyce's novel and its praise of the ordinary. It also addresses postcolonial perspectives and stresses the novel's treatment of love and pacifism. These aspects were also positively received by the reviewers. For many reviewers, the main merit of the novel is found in its tribute to sensuality and the author's joyful play with words. Negative comments tended to relate to the novel's well-known reputation of being difficult to read. One reviewer, however, strongly questioned the current value of the experimental nature of the novel. Opinions also diverged on whether the retranslation replaces or merely supplements the first Swedish translation.

Keywords: James Joyce; *Ulysses*; Swedish literary criticism; modernism; retranslation; reception history

1. Introduction, Aim, and Scope

The early 20th century was a particularly prolific period in Sweden with respect to the production of new translations of a number of modern classics. Apart from James Joyce's modernistic masterpiece *Ulysses* (Joyce 2012), translated by Erik Andersson, which is the focus of this paper, Swedish readers could enjoy new versions of J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Ring* (2004–2005), translated by Erik Andersson (prose) and Lotta Olsson (poetry), and *The Hobbit* (2007), translated by Erik Andersson (prose) and Johan Swedenmark (poetry). Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (2005), was translated by Ullrika Wallenström, Albert Camus' *The Stranger/The Outsider* (2009) was translated by Jan Stolpe, and Gustav Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (2012) was translated by Anders Bodegård. To this enumeration, which by no means is exhaustive, several novels by Jane Austen and modernist writer Virginia Woolf should be added: *Emma* (2010), translated by Rose-Marie Nielsen, followed by *Persuasion* (2013) and *Sense and Sensibility* (2016), both translated by Maria Ekman; *The Years* (2015), *Three Guineas* (2017) and *To the Lighthouse* (2019) translated by Margareta Backgård.

The release of the Swedish retranslation of Joyce's *Ulysses* coincided with the expiration of the European copyrights of the author's work. This was of course no coincidence. According to the publisher Bonnier (2012, personal communication), there were, however, no financial reasons behind their decision to delay their commission of a new translation. In this respect, it is noted that they had received support from the Ireland Literature Exchange translation fund. Rather, the delay was due

to the notorious difficulty in obtaining the necessary permission from the Joyce estate. The Swedish retranslation was, in fact, one of several retranslations of the novel which appeared around the same time. In 2004, the prestigious publisher Gallimard released a new French translation; a polyphonic version where different individuals had translated the 18 episodes (Hoepffner 2011). In 2012, Dutch readers received a second retranslation, and, in the same year, Finnish fans of Joyce finally had an alternative to the original translation, which contained many errors (Schueler 2010; Zilliacus 2012).

The aim and scope of the present paper is to examine how the Swedish retranslation of the most (in)famous work of modernism was received in Sweden. Almost a hundred years have passed since *Ulysses* was first published and it is over sixty years since the first Swedish translation was made available. Questions that are raised in this context are: *How was Joyce's modernist novel evaluated a century after the novel's initial publication? What questions and problems did the retranslation pose for reviewers and critics? In what respect did the reception of the retranslation differ from the reception of the first Swedish translation?* and *How was Andersson's translation evaluated?* The discussion that follows should be understood as an instance of 'reception history', covering the period immediately following the release of the retranslation, and is limited to an examination of certain paratextual features found in the retranslation and a consideration of the relevant literary reviews that appeared in the daily press.

A study of the Swedish context could be argued to be of particular interest as Swedish was the first language James Joyce was translated into: In 1921, a year before the Irish author became famous through the publication of *Ulysses*, a Swedish version of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was released at the publication house Gebers, translated by Ebba Atterbom (Olofsson 1986, p. 18). (Years later, the translator's name, slightly changed, would appear in a pun in *Finnegans Wake* (1939): "The Fin had a flux and his Ebba a ride./Attabom, attabom, attabombomboom!" (Olofsson 1986, p. 36)). The publisher Nils Geber also had ideas to commission *Ulysses* for translation into Swedish soon after its release, but abandoned these plans after reading the novel, estimating that the Swedish audience was not yet ready and that it would at best sell only a few hundred copies (Olofsson 1986, p. 33).

Instead, the first Swedish version of *Ulysses*, entitled *Odysseus* (Sw.) (Joyce 1946), was published in 1946 by Bonniers publishing house. The translator, Thomas Warburton (1918–2016), was a relatively young Finland-Swedish editor, translator, and writer at the time. In 1993, a revised version was released where Warburton had made more than 4000 changes (Joyce 1993). These changes were informed by Hans Walter Gabler's annotated edition (from 1984) and the latest Joyce research. Both versions were praised and were very well received (Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, p. 52; Riikonen 2004; Bladh 2014). As reported on in Section 3.2. below, many critics did not think that Warburton's translation was dated. However, the publisher was obviously of another opinion and, in 2007, Erik Andersson was commissioned to retranslate Joyce's most important novel.

Erik Andersson (1962–) is a Swedish author and translator. He is primarily well known for his retranslation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, due to the strong reactions his translation prompted in the Tolkien community. Andersson's version remained much closer to the original and consequently differed substantially from the first Swedish translation from the 1960's by Åke Ohlmarks. Whilst producing the translation, Andersson also prepared a commentary, or a "translation diary", *Översättarens anmärkningar* (The translator's notes), where he reflected on different aspects connected to the translation process. A similar book, *Dag in och dag ut med en dag i Dublin* (Day In and Day Out with One Day in Dublin) (Andersson 2012), was released in conjunction with his retranslation of *Ulysses*. Here, Andersson exposed for example how he used the first Swedish translation of *Ulysses* as a sort of "safety net" ("säkerhetsnät"): after translating a chapter, he would always compare it to Warburton's version in order to further reduce the chances of misunderstanding or misinterpreting the unruly original.

Not surprisingly, Andersson's recognized skill as a translator—including his experience of completing a previous translation project that lasted several years—explains why the publisher commissioned him for the task. Two other reasons why he was commissioned are Andersson's

thorough knowledge of Ireland and Irish literature and his sense of humor; an important feature for a Joyce translator (Åkerstedt 2012, editor at Bonniers, pc).

2. Paratextual Features of the Translation

The new translation was released in January 2012, in an impressive softback edition two weeks before what would have been Joyce's 130th birthday. A year later, in 2013, the novel was available as an e-book and in the form of an audiobook in a recording by renowned actor Reinar Brynolfsson. In 2014, readers could purchase the paperback edition. Meanwhile, real connoisseurs could revel in a special gift-set edition in the form of a wooden box including the softback edition, the CD version, and Erik Andersson's translation diary *Dag in och dag ut med en dag in Dublin*.

In many respects, the aim of the retranslation was clearly to stay as close as possible to the original. To start with, the former Swedish title, *Odysseus*, which had been chosen by the first translator, Thomas Warburton, was changed to *Ulysses* and was thus identical to the title of the English original. The publisher Eva Bonnier (2012, pc) explained that there were several reasons behind their decision to change the title. With a new title, the publisher clearly signaled that the retranslation should be considered as a new edition. At the same time, they wished to respect the author's intentions. Admittedly, Joyce had chosen the Latin form of the name (and not *Odysseus*, which also exists in English) even though its use is less common in English, compared to Swedish (Farran-Lee 2012, p. 795). Another reason why *Ulysses* was chosen as the title of the retranslation was that the publisher wished to align itself with a European tradition, where many other publishers in different European countries favoured a title for their translations that was derived from the Latin form (O'Neill 2005, p. 125). No changes in the title had, however, occurred, at least not by 2005, when Patrick O'Neill's study of Joyce in translation was published. The Swedish retranslation was not alone in breaking this trend in 2012; the second retranslation into Dutch was entitled *Ulysses*, not *Ulyxis* as used by the two previous versions, and the Finnish retranslation abandoned the former *Odysseus* in favour of *Ulysses*, just like the Swedish retranslation.

Regarding its physical dimension and layout, the Swedish retranslation gives the impression that the publisher wished it to be as similar as possible to the original edition from 1922 that was published by Shakespeare and Co. in Paris, by Sylvia Beach. A brief note on the back flap of the dust jacket, however, indicates that the design of the cover actually emulates the first British edition. The book is a heavy imposing tome with a turquoise blue cover and the title of the novel, the name of the author, and the publishing house (in smaller font at the very bottom of the cover) revealed in white text. The flaps of the dust jacket contain a short note on the author (front flap) and a brief summary of the novel (back flap), where the translation is described as "outstanding" ("enastående"). The remaining paratextual elements consist of a postscript ("Efterskrift", 7 pages in length) followed by an extensive list of "word explanations" ("Ordförklaringar", 21 pages, 592 items). These "word explanations" are translations of non-English words and expressions in the novel which are left un-translated in the Swedish translation. In many cases, the entries also indicate the source of the expressions. A concluding paragraph consists of an acknowledgment to those individuals who the translator consulted for help in compiling the list of "word explanations".

The softback edition does not inform the reader at the beginning of the book about the wordlist and it is thus only by looking through the book's entirety that the reader will find it. The postscript is also somewhat concealed, given that it is not mentioned on the title page or in a 'table of contents'. In the softback edition, a brief note on the back flap states: "With a postscript by Stephen Farran-Lee" ("Med en efterskrift av Stephen Farran-Lee."). This underwent a slight change in the paperback edition where this short notice receives a slightly more prominent position since it appears on the back of the book.

No information about which edition of the original text that the translation is based on is included in the colophon, placed at the end of the book. In one review in the national daily *Dagens Nyheter*, critic, academic, and future member of the Swedish Academy, Sara Danius described this unfortunate

omission on behalf of the publisher as a "major blunder" ("plump i protokollet") (Danius 2012). The number of editions of *Ulysses* have, in fact, become so numerous that the *Cambridge Companion to Ulysses* only refers to Hans Walter Gabler's edition from 1984 in the section "Manuscripts and Early Versions" among their suggestions for further reading (Latham 2014, p. 221). Danius reports that there are at least three different editions of the book, all of which are afflicted with various problems, and that there is no consensus within the research community concerning a 'definitive' version of the novel, even though most researchers use Gabler's 1984 edition. Danius opines that this unclear situation called for an explanation on the publisher's behalf as to which edition was used and why.

Let us now return to the postscript and examine it in more detail. Contrary to the lengthy afterword in the revised version of the first Swedish translation in 1993, where Thomas Warburton accounted for the difficulties connected with the source text and the implications the most recent research in Joyce studies had on his revised translation (approximately 4000 changes), the postscript in the 2012 retranslation was not written by the translator. Stephen Farran-Lee, a Swedish publisher, translator, and cultural journalist specialized in contemporary Irish literature wrote the postscript of the new translation. Between 1993 and 1996, Farran-Lee was the editor of Bonnier's Literary Magazine (*BLM*). He has also translated novels by the Irish authors Patrick McCabe and Eoin McNamee. Working with Ola Larsmo, he wrote *Joyce bor inte längre här* ("Joyce doesn't live here anymore"), a book on contemporary Irish fiction. Even though Farran-Lee is a prominent figure within the literary profession, he is somewhat unknown to the public.

Whereas the function of Warbruton's postscript primarily corresponds to "the first minor function" in Genette's taxonomy of 'later prefaces' (Genette [1977] 2010, p. 240), i.e., "the function of calling attention to the corrections, material or other, made in this new edition" (ibid.), the function of the postscript in the retranslation also corresponds to Genette's chief function of the original assumptive authorial preface; namely, "to promote and guide a reading of the work" (Genette [1977] 2010, p. 265). As Farran-Lee indicates, the intended addressee of the postscript is not a reader who just finished the novel, but rather, a reader who gave up on reading the whole book and discovered the postscript only accidently, while flipping through the book to check where the end was. The postscript thus takes the form of a gentle, yet learned, informative and personal encouragement to the reader to continue reading the novel expressed in a set of suggestions for how the reader might approach the book.

Farran-Lee begins with acknowledging that "[i]t is, of course, impossible to say something new about this novel" ("Det är förstås omöjligt att säga något nytt om den här romanen.") (Farran-Lee 2012, p. 794) and that, instead, his task is to provide a helping hand to a first-time reader to overcome his or her fear of the imposing volume. He notes that the passages which were once considered obscene and scandalous are no longer offensive, and that the novel's reputation for being difficult to read remains intact. In his view, *Ulysses*, as a literary institution, does not make the book less frightening.

The most renowned introduction to *Ulysses* in Swedish is *Om James Joyces Odysseus* ("On James Joyce's Ulysses" 1970) by Olof Lagercrantz, a leading intellectual and editor-in-chief of *Dagens Nyheter* between 1960 and 1975. It is thus not surprising that Farran-Lee recommends this book as a starting point to the reader. He praises Lagercrantz's ability to expose the core elements of the novel and the way in which he compares Joyce's play with Homer's epic. Farran-Lee stresses the greatness of Leopold Bloom's ordinariness, and the way Joyce's allusions to the Odyssey resulted in a change of roles; namely by means of Joyce's profanation of the Greek hero, the ordinary and trivial gain in status whilst the antique champion is made more human. Whereas Lagercrantz draws a number of comparisons with Birger Sjöberg (1885–1914), the Swedish poet, novelist, and songwriter, contemporary with Joyce, Farran-Lee relates to a more central figure in the Swedish song tradition; namely, Carl Michael Bellman (1740–1795) and his *Fredmans epistlar* ("Fredman's Epistles"). In a manner similar to Joyce, they combine myth with characters from the lower social classes, which are then exposed to the authors' jokes, pastiches, and parodies, but always with a certain respect and care.

Farran-Lee continues with his discussion of the famous parallels that can be drawn between Joyce's novel and Homer's *Odyssey* and what the reader should know beforehand in order to enjoy a

fuller understanding of the novel. He first mentions the anecdote where Joyce explains to his aunt that all she needed in order to understand his book was Charles Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*, an abbreviated version in prose for children, which fascinated Joyce as a young child. It is also noted that this adaptation inspired the author to use the Latin form of the Greek hero's name as the title for his book. Again, we note that this form is used in most translations of the novel, for example, in French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Norwegian, Danish, and now in Swedish. The change of the novel's title in the Swedish retranslation is thus only hinted at and mentioned merely *en passant*, since this information is presented within parenthesis in the postscript.

The following part of the postscript deals with the intrinsic, and occasionally oxymoronic, schema that Joyce used as a template for his novel and observes that Stuart Gilbert, a British academic and translator, based his seminal paper *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Study* on this schema. The specialized encyclopedia, *Ulysses Annotated* (first edition, 1974), by the American literary scholar Don Gifford is also made reference to for the reader who wish to examine these details more closely.

Once Farran-Lee has highlighted these erudite observations regarding *Ulysses*, he goes on to claim that the novel can be reduced in its essence to a story about two men and a woman, in Dublin on an ordinary early summer's day, on June 16th, 1904. This day, Farran-Lee remarks, was not a day chosen at random by the author, since it was the day that he went for a walk with Nora Barnacle for the first time, the woman who would later become his wife. For Farran-Lee, the fact that the author chose to recreate this particular day in his novel explains why he always considered it as a book on 'love', but also a confession of a belief in 'peace'.

The final parts of the postscript discuss the 'pacifist' features of the novel, while placing the novel it in its historical context of British colonial rule. Farran-Lee notes that Joyce advocated for a view on the notion of "nation" which radically differed from the opinion of the chauvinistic Irish renaissance movement. Likewise, Farran-Lee remarks that this anti-heroic attitude is also directed towards Bloom's marriage. The postscript ends with a remark that the novel is an anti-machoist expression of the approval of physical love.

Occasionally, the postscript takes on a more personal note. The Farran-Lee reveals, for example, that he has always had a rather tense relationship with "the bloody book" ("den där jävla boken") (Farran-Lee 2012, p. 784), given that he was named after one of the protagonists, Stephen Dedalus, a character whom he had difficulty in identifying himself with. Instead, he admitted that he feels more related to Leopold Bloom.

In the next section, we turn to the translation's reception in the daily press, where we will see that quite a few critics also revealed their own personal relationship to Joyce's masterpiece. Many topics that are discussed in the postscript were similarly treated in the reviews.

3. Reception in the Daily Press

This section is divided into two parts—the first deals with the critics' general observations on Joyce and his novel and includes a comparative perspective vis-à-vis the reception of the first Swedish translation of *Ulysses* (1946), based on how it is described in Rut Nordwall-Ehrlow's excellent study "*Ulysses* väg till svensk publik" (*Ulysses*' way to its Swedish audience), published in a special volume dedicated to Joyce in Sweden and edited by Joyce specialist and translator Tommy Olofsson (1986). The second part treats the critical evaluation of the retranslation; here, references to the first Swedish translation are included only when the reviewers make comparisons in order to highlight differences or similarities between the two versions.

3.1. General Viewpoints on Joyce and His Novel

The release of the new Swedish version of *Ulysses* was a major literary event and was covered in both the local and national daily press. Even while the translator was working on his translation, the project was given attention to in the national newspapers, especially in media outlets that were controlled by the Bonnier group. In April 2010, when the translation was halfway completed, Andersson

was interviewed by Magnus Haglund in the Bonnier-owned evening paper *Expressen*. A few days later, a small news item in the conservative *Svenska Dagbladet*, one of only two Swedish national morning papers and not owned by Bonnier, indicated that new translations into Swedish and Finnish were on the way. A few months later, in July 2010, the other national morning paper *Dagens Nyheter*, owned by Bonniers, began to release short excerpts of Andersson's translation, presented as "Joyceries" ("Joycerier") or "fragments of a translation in progress" ("skärvor ur en översättning in progress") (Wiman 2010). Joyce would continue as their "guest Twitter contributor" on an irregular basis for about a year, until May 2011.

In early November 2011, a *TT Spektra*[1] news-item entitled "A new translation of *Ulysses*" ("'*Ulysses*' ges ut i nyöversättning") announced the impending release of the novel in eight local newspapers. Another *TT Spektra* article, published in late December/early January, also promoted the novel as it included *Ulysses* among its recommended reads from the forthcoming season. In most of the newspapers, the lead paragraph started out with a reference to Joyce's novel—"Colossus" ("Tungviktare")—and also this book was generally covered first. However, as for the heading, Joyce's novel was somewhat eclipsed by the other books reviewed. Only one of 17, mostly local, newspapers used a heading that obliquely referred to *Ulysses*: "Retranslated classic among this spring's books" ("Nyöversatt klassiker i vårens bokskörd").

The public's attention on the release of the book was further intensified in the press by means of a good number of interviews with the translator. Especially widespread was Sara Ullberg's article (from *TT Spektra*) which was printed in approximately thirty, mostly local, papers, where Erik Andersson referred to his work as "an intellectual capability test" ("ett intellektuellt duglighetstest") (Ullberg 2011). Erik Andersson also appeared in national and regional papers owned by the Bonnier group (*Expressen*, *Sydsvenskan*, and *Dagens Nyheter*) and the competing national morning paper *Svenska Dagbladet*, as well in the local *Alingsås Tidning*, located in the area where Andersson lives.

Concerning critical reviews of the book, a search in the digital database Mediearkivet revealed that 21 reviews of the novel were published in the Swedish press between the period 2 February and 22 March. Later on, in June, in connection with Bloomsday, a review by Clas Zilliacus was also published in the Finno-Swedish daily *Hufvudstadsbladet*, where both the Swedish and the Finnish retranslations were the topic of discussion. Approximately one-third of the reviews were published on the scheduled review date[2], February 3rd. Since seven of the reviews appeared in more than one local paper, Joyce's novel was in total reviewed in approximately 50 newspapers.[3] A good half of the reviews also discussed Andersson's translation diary *Dag ut och dag in med en dag i Dublin*. In this respect, interest in Joyce's novel had not changed particularly much from previous Swedish (re)editions. If parallel/duplicate publications are to be excluded, the number of reviews of Erik Andersson's retranslation was only slightly less than how Thomas Warburton's two versions were received in 1946 and in 1993 (Bladh 2014).

The headings of the review articles were of two types. Half of the cases indicate that the news-value associated with the book was primarily based on the fact that a new translation of *Ulysses* was now available in Swedish. The review articles generally included a positive qualitative assessment of the

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1 *TT Spektra* (*Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå Spektra*) is a Swedish news agency. Since 2013, it is part of the larger news agency group *TT Nyhetsbyrån*.

2 In Sweden, new publications have a set date, chosen by the publisher, for reviews in the daily press. This custom, the aim of which is to ensure that critics are not influenced by each other, is less strictly followed today.

3 The Swedish newspaper system is organized in big media groups, such as MittMedia, Gota Media, NTM, Bonniers, Stampen, etc., which are shifting from time to time, since they buy or sell each other (Weibull et al. 2018, pp. 41, 133–39). There are two reasons why a critic can publish the same review in different newspapers. Either he or she can write their article for a specific media group, which owns a number of different papers, or the critic can sell the review to different papers (which must be the case with Martin Lagerholm, since his review is published both in *Smålandsposten* and in *Barometern-OT*, which belong to different media groups). A review published in different newspapers generally has the same content, but the heading and the lead paragraph may differ, as well as illustrations and layout. In this survey, only print newspapers were included.

book. In this category, we find[4]: "From a dated *Odysseus* to a *Ulysses* with bite" ("Från bedagad Odysseus till Ulysses med bett") (Nyström 2012); "*Ulysses* in an elegant retranslation" ("Ulysses i elegant nyöversättning") (Jonsson 2012); "New readers get to know (a new) *Ulysses*" ("Nya läsare får ta till sig (ny) Ulysses") (Dahlman 2012); "Retranslation of *Ulysses* sparkles exactly like the original" ("Nyöversättning av Ulysses gnistrar precis som i originalet") (Dahlman 2012); "Now James Joyce has Swedish as mother tongue" ("Nu har James Joyce fått svenska som modersmål") (Danius 2012); "Refreshing retranslation of *Ulysses*" ("Uppfriskande nyöversättning av Ulysses") (Olofsson 2012); "The new *Ulysses*—a great achievement by the translator" ("Nya Ulysses—en översättarbragd") (Nordlund-Hessler 2012); "After four years with a new *Ulysses*" ("Efter fyra år med en ny Ulysses") (Balgård 2012); "*Odysseus* in modern cloths" ("Odysseus i moderna kläder") (Bergsten 2012); and "Well cut language" ("Välskuren språkdräkt") (Högström 2012).

The other half of the reviews focused on different characteristic aspects of the novel. For example, that it is set in the Irish capital during one very ordinary day: "A day in Dublin" ("En dag i Dublin") (Kuivanen 2012); "One single day in June in Dublin" ("En enda junidag i Dublin") (Dahlman 2012); "Lost in Dublin found again" ("Vilse i Dublin leder rätt") (Kjellgren 2012); "A very special weekday" ("En alldeles särskild vardag") (Svensson 2012); and "A mythical day in Dublin" ("En högst mytomspunnen dag i Dublin") (Lagerholm 2012). One regional newspaper chose to highlight the novel's praise of ordinary things: "Trifling matters become great world literature" ("Struntsaker blir stor världslitteratur") (Degerman 2012). Another referred to the aspect that *Ulysses* is not connected to events outside: "A time which rested in itself" ("En tid som vilade i sig själv") (Polvall 2012). Yet others emphasized the parallels with the Greek epic: "Odyssey over man" ("Odyssé över människan)" and "An odyssey over mankind" ("En odyssé över mänskligheten") (Petdersen 2012). Elsewhere Joyce's burlesque and direct expression was highlighted: "The language of flesh" ("Köttets språk") (Jenny Tunedal 2012). One review was more general in their praise of the author: "The joy of Joyce" (Gradvall 2012). Another referred to the fleshly and experimental aspect of the book: "Sensual experiment" ("Sinnligt experiment") (Nyström 2012). Finally, two local papers used a heading which referred to the novel's reputation of being notoriously difficult to read: "Ulysses—an indigestible process" ("Ulysses—en svårsmält process) (Bernesjö 2012) and "Thick and confusing but worth reading" ("Tjock och förvirrande men värd att läsa") (Jonsson 2012).

As a first general observation, we note that the Swedish critics in 2012 welcomed the new Swedish translation of Joyce's novel with unbounded enthusiasm. The book was clearly still considered a masterpiece, although a very strange one. Martin Lagerholm characterised it as "one of word literature's most odd and impressive creations" ("ett av världslitteraturens märkligaste och mäktigaste skapelser") (Lagerholm 2012). There was definitely a consensus that two time periods could now be delineated: a distinct 'before *Ulysses*' and an 'after *Ulysses*'.

In this respect, the perspective had not changed drastically from when the novel was first introduced into Swedish. Nordwall-Ehrlow observed that the novel already at this time was considered as a classic, unique of its kind and acknowledged for its "seminal importance" ("nyskapande betydelse") (Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, p. 52). The novel was above all praised for its innovating style and form, whereas comments on its "concepts of mankind and ethos" ("människosyn och livsuppfattning") were rare and mostly done *en passant* (Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, p. 61). In her view, this focus on form could be explained by the fact that this experimental style was still seen as new and innovative at the time (Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, p. 63). Her general judgment though is that the early reception of *Ulysses* as expressed in the ca. 10 reviews included in her study could mainly be characterized by a "reserved enthusiasm" ("reserverad entusiasm") (Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, p. 66). She suggest that this attitude partly could be a result of the "idealistic schooling of the critics" ("litteraturkritikernas idealistiska

[4] In the following enumeration, some reviews are quoted more than once. This is because different headings were occasionally used when a review was published in different newspapers.

skolning") (Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, p. 66), which could explain why the reviewers were not convinced by the ethos of the novel and, accordingly, why *Ulysses* did not as yet had had a general breakthrough.

A more conspicuous difference is that Joyce, in the 2012 reception, was no longer compared to such a wide range of authors of the Western literary canon. In the 1946 reception, Nordwall-Ehrlow (1986, p. 53) found mentions of Proust, Gide, Kafka, Hesse, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Swift, Ibsen, Cervantes and 'Alice in Wonderland'. In 2012, the referrals were mainly to British modernist writers such as Virginia Wolf, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, occasionally quoted in order to explain in what respect Joyce differed from his contemporary modernist giants (Petdersen 2012). But Joyce is also compared to or mentioned along with prominent people in other disciplines (the Jazz musician Coltrane (Gradvall 2012), the physicist Einstein (Olofsson 2012), and the painter and sculptor Marcel Duchamp (Nyström 2012)) in order to emphasize the revolutionary aspect of his oeuvre, which broke completely with earlier traditions.

Nowadays, Joyce and *Ulysses* are thus incontestably part of the literary canon. But what is it that makes the book worth reading today and in what way does this differ from the opinions of the reviewers of the first translation? We begin with an inventory of the attributes that the critics of the retranslation thought motivated why the novel is still a major work of literature.

The critics under discussion frequently stressed the importance of *Ulysses*'s praise of the ordinary as a key element. They felt empathy with the way Joyce turned Leopold Bloom, an ordinary and rather unsuccessful advertising agent, into a modern, humane Odysseus. This refers to how the author turned the henpecked protagonist, which in every aspect is a complete opposite of the Greek war hero, into a "magnificent person" ("en storslagen människa") (Dahlman 2012). There is, thus, no longer any objections against the novel's focus on rather trivial matters. In the earlier critic, however, some reviewers considered this perspective too confined, regretting that other more important themes or values were absent (Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, pp. 53–54). Among the objections, we find that the novel was seen as too provincial at a time when only a couple of years earlier wars had devastated the European continent.

In 1946, there was also an ambivalence as to whether the novel lacked in universality or not, even though this opinion is questioned by Nordwall-Ehrlow. In her view, judgments which she finds in the two reviews proclaiming such a lack—that "anguish" ("ångest") is conceived of as a general theme in the novel or that the author aspires to tell "the truth about men and life" ("sanningen om människorna och livet") (Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, p. 55)—clearly indicate that these critics acknowledged that *Ulysses* addressed matters of universal value. No such objections can be found in the 2012 reception of the novel. In fact, the word "universality" does not appear at all in any review of the retranslation. Perhaps it is today such an obvious attribute of *Ulysses* that it does not have to be commented on. Moreover, both the early and later critic give prominence to Joyce's way of describing his characters and consider Ulysses as "a praise to life" ("hyllning till livet") (Svensson 2012). As for the parallels with the Homeric epic, several reviews of the retranslation omitted to comment on them, and, occasionally, opinions diverged on their importance for coming to a proper understanding of Joyce's novel. Kuivanan claimed that some parts of the novel were almost unintelligible for a reader who was unaware of the connections to the Greek epic. More common was, however, the opinion conveyed in the postscript by Farran-Lee; namely, that the allusions to Odysseys' journey are certainly not unimportant, but still do not constitute the most vital element of the story. This view is probably most clearly indicated in Gradvall's review. Gradvall's first advice to the reader is not to pay attention at all to the Greek parallels. In his opinion, the reader might otherwise easily be distracted and caught up in a game of solving a puzzle. In fact, he suggests that the first-time reader should not read up on the Greek myth at all, skip the first part of the book, and move on directly to Chapter 4, instead.

In comparison, no critic of the first translation left out the allusions to Homer's epic; on the other hand, neither did many of them develop on this theme. Only Olle Carlsson, a young teacher who prior to his review of *Ulysses* had published articles on two other novels by Joyce, drew important conclusions from these parallels (Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, pp. 59–60). Carlsson argues that the

mythological framework of the novel reinforces the trivialities of modern life as they stand out clearer when contrasted to the ancient saga. As we noticed earlier in this section, this is a reoccurring theme in many of the reviews of the retranslation.

Some reviewers also emphasize the allusions to other works of world literature. In her review of the retranslation, Dahlman finds the parallels with Shakespeare's work of more interest; citing Hamlet's ghost and the 1600th-century playwright's wife, Ann Hathaway, abandoned in Stratford, as an inspiration for the character of Penelope/Molly. Per Svensson, also in a review of the new translation, in regional South Swedish paper *Sydsvenskan*, calls attention to the fact that the novel is replete with allusions to the father–son theme in other literary classics, for example *Hamlet* and Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*. The allusions to Shakespeare were also commented on by the most negatively inclined reviewer of the first translation, Moa Martinson, a prominent proletarian author and the only female critic of Warburton's version. In her opinion, it is clear that Joyce had great esteem for the English playwright but nevertheless she finds his attitude towards Shakespeare too full of scorn and disrespect (Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, p. 64).

The Swedish critics did not pay a great deal of attention to the title, at least not in reviews of the novel when it was first introduced in Swedish 1946 and later revised in 1993 (Bladh 2014). Commentary on this issue was, in fact, restricted to a single brief remark by critic and poet Artur Lundkvist, who considered the title change "somewhat unnecessary" ("något onödig") (Lundkvist 1946) in a lengthy review in *Vi*. Similarly, most reviewers of the retranslation did not comment on the change in title. Three critics explicitly welcomed the new title. In Svensson's words, it was a "wise" ("klokt") choice, since the allusions to Homer's epic (according to his interpretation) are not crucial to understanding the novel but, rather, instantiate an expression for the author's joyful play with intertextual references. Kuivanan used similar terms and described the change as "correct" ("riktigt") but without developing this claim any further. In Pedersen's view, the former Swedish title, *Odysseus*, was not only pedagogical but also indicative of the style of Warburton's translation at a whole. This is actually the only review where a critic discussed the original author's choice of title in more detail. Pedersen makes reference to the children's book mentioned in Farran-Lee's postscript but, ultimately, he explains Joyce's preference for 'Ulysses' as a matter of rhythm and musicality: he liked the way it sounded. In an interview with the translator in *Dagens Nyheter*, Jonas Thente (2012) remarked that the novel now bears the title that Swedish readers had always used when referring to it.

As already mentioned, the reviewers of the first translation unanimously admired Joyce for his linguistic playfulness. A distinctive feature of the author's modernistic experiment. This is also an aspect of the novel which received much claim by the critics of the retranslation. In Gradvall's opinion, Joyce's mode of expression was "quick, smart, natural" ("rapt, smart, ledigt") (Gradvall 2012). Other reviewers appreciated the stylistic variation, the puns, and the word formations that can be found in the novel.

Högström highlights the merits of Joyces's narrative technique, which, in her opinion, creates "a presence, which never decreases in power" ("en närvaro som aldrig förlorar i kraft) (Högström 2012). She finds that Joyce's seemingly never-ending digressions amusing and explains that they actually follow a pattern, since Joyce always comes back to certain details: a joke, a misunderstanding, a woman in labor. To her, this is the novel's "permanently shaking nerve" ("ständigt självande nerven") (Högström 2012). Kjellgren praises Joyce's skill at portraying people, especially how he displays sides of his characters that they do not necessarily want to show. Kjellgren also draws attention to the claim that there are so many various ways in which Ulysses can be read, and the idea that one can easily spend a lifetime without exhausting all aspects of the novel.

In a review in *Borås Tidning*, Bo W. Jonsson is perhaps less impressed by Joyce's baroque style. In his opinion, the merit of the novel is, instead, to be found in the author's inner thoughts, his narrative, his reflections, and his use of history. In the local daily newspaper, *Helsingborgs Dagblad*, Henrik Pedersen acknowledges that few other books come across as so modern in comparison to *Ulysses*. He stresses that Joyce's political attitude was ahead of his time, since it embraced a multicultural

peaceful world where paternalistic structures had been abandoned. In this respect, he acknowledges that *Ulysses* comes across as a more enjoyable novel than other important modernist works. Finally, he also comments on the importance of language in the novel; not only is it a tool for communication, but it is also something we cannot control.

In Nyströms's view, "the sensual concretion of straight narration" ("det raka berättandets sinnliga konkretion") (Nyström 2012) explains why the novel is still relevant today. Gradvall also notes that the novel is a beautiful homage to urbanity, the big city, with all its possibilities.

Turning now to examine some of the negative opinions voiced about the book, we note that Jan-Olov Nyström's review, which was published in several local papers in northern Sweden, argues that present-day attempts to move literary borders seldom succeed in producing something of interest. Instead, he claims, they tend to preserve old material, in contrast to the originals, which remain relevant. Apparently, this can be observed in the case of *Ulysses*. In spite of his initial positive assessment of the novel, Nyström reveals himself as a most critical voice concerning the present relevance of Joyce's novel as well as the modernistic project on the whole. He admits that the novel has its strengths but, at the same time, he dismisses many of the novel's lengthy passages of "babble" ("pladdret") (Nyström 2012), which he goes on to further judge as "meaningless" ("meningslösa") (Nyström 2012). Even though other critics have also characterized the novel as being difficult to read, they express their opinions in a more facetious tone. In addition, they do not explicitly connect these wordy passages to modernism, as does Nyström. As such, Nyström is alone in questioning the value of the experimental feature of the novel. In his view, the 20th century can be characterized by a serious misunderstanding that the only way to break with previous models and ideas was by introducing a radically new form. He specifically resents the way these experiments affected language with respect to intelligibility and as a means for communication. In Nyström's view, the "arrogance of the avant-garde" ("avantgard-arrogansen") (Nyström 2012) is a disturbing element when reading *Ulysses*. As an experiment, he finds it acceptable, but not as a norm.

As mentioned in the previous section, Farran-Lee noted that *Ulysses* is no less frightening today when it appears on prescribed reading lists (for example, as part of a course in literature) and argued that the first-time reader might need some encouragement to read the whole book. It is obvious that many reviewers considered the book to be a major challenge. This was perhaps most ludicrously expressed in Jan Gradvall's review in the national evening paper *Expressen*, where he declared that reading *Ulysses* is more often than not described as the intellectual equivalent to completing *Vansbrosimmet*, an annual 3-kilometre open-water swimming competition in Dalarna. According to Inger Dahlman, writing for the local newpapers *Borlänge Tidning*, *Nya Ludvika Tidning*, and *Sölvesborgs-Tidningen*, only one chapter was easy to read—the passage with the three girls on the beach ("Nausicaa"). Pauli Olavi Kuivanen, in *Norrköpings Tidningar*, declared that many a reader has "surrendered when the text has risen up like a monster wave" ("gett upp när texten tornat upp sig likt en monstervåg") (Kuivanen 2012). Thomas Kjellgren, in the local newspaper *Trelleborgs Allehanda*, suggests that it is best to restrict one's reading of the novel to a maximum of 50 pages a day. For Bo Degerman, in local *Dala-Demokraten*, the novel is not too heavy if served in small portions, but, as a whole, he found the reading hard and tiresome ("dryg") and admitted that he had not yet managed to finish the book. Lennart Bernesjö, in the local newspaper, *Arvika Nyheter*, also acknowledges that the reader needs time to digest the novel.

The translator, Erik Andersson, can thus be seen to have been proven right when he expressed doubts about Joyce's claim that *Ulysses* is a novel that is accessible for ordinary, non-specialist readers (Haglund 2010).

Even though *Ulysses* had a reputation of being difficult to read already when it was first released, there is actually only one explicit example of such complaints in Nordwall-Ehrlow's presentation of the critic of the first translation. It is Moa Martinson and she is particularly outspoken in her dismissal of the reader-unfriendliness of the novel: "a terrible work to get through" ("ett fruktansvärt arbete att komma igenom") (Martinson, quoted in Nordwall-Ehrlow 1986, p. 63).

Another difference between the receptions of the two translations is that many critics of the retranslation accounted for the circumstances around the novel, either at the time when it was written and first received or later, with regards to the editorial disputes caused by the many versions of the manuscript. This perspective does not appear so notably in the critic from 1946, at least not in Norwall-Ehrlow's presentation. On the other hand, we do not find many reflections on the sentiments or mood created by the novel in the reviews of the new translations. The acute sensations of a state of "late-on-earth" ("sent på jorden"), "terrible anguish" ("förtvivlad ångest") and "spiritual distress" ("andlig nöd"), which were evoked in some of the reviews in 1946 do not have their counterpart in the 2012 critic.

3.2. Evaluation of the Retranslation

We will now consider a number of critical evaluations of the new translation. As previously mentioned, the critics unanimously embraced the new Swedish version of *Ulysses*. They praised the translator, both for his courage for accepting the challenging task and for the successful result of his dedicated labor. His translation is, for example, described as "elegant" ("elegant") (Jonsson 2012), "fresh, sensitive, and entertaining" ("fräsch, känslig och underhållande") (Olsson 2012) and "congenial" ("congenial") (Högström 2012). Opinions diverge, however, as to what role Andersson's translation plays in relationship to Warburton's revised version from 1993. In other words, the questions that are raised are whether the retranslation is to be seen as distinct, complementary interpretation of Joyce's novel or whether it replaces the earlier translation. According to Ulf Olsson, Warburton's translation had aged over the years to a point where the need for a retranslation was close to acute. Peterson's judgement is even harsher. He claims that Warburton's text had aged quickly. Nyström also describes the old version as "passé" ("bedagad"), in comparison to the new translation. Other critics are more cautious. Danius remarks, somewhat surprised, that Warburton's revised translation still reads very well, and characterises it as "natural, inventive, intelligent" ("ledig, uppfinningsrik, intelligent") (Danius 2012). Tunedal is of a similar opinion, acknowledging that the previous translation remains a remarkable achievement. In a review in the Finno-Swedish *Hufvudstadsbladet*, Clas Zilliacus, a compatriot of Warburton's, observes that no Swedish version of *Ulysses* will probably be much better than the first translation, just different and newer. Martin Lagerholm is of the same opinion. Apart from having the merit of using a "more modernized idiom" ("mera moderniserat idiom"), he finds Andersson's translation reasonably equal to Warburton's version. Balgård, after a lengthy comparison, concludes that both translations are equal in merit.

There is, however, consensus that Andersson's translation is rawer, filthier, and more physical than the previous translation. Andersson's style is, in this respect, considered to be closer to Joyce's style and more in harmony with the author's intentions to portray ordinary people and their everyday life, however repugnant and distasteful they might be. Jan Gradvall notices for example that the "brown hole" in the passage on Molly's behind stayed "brown" in Andersson's version, whereas Warburton preferred the euphemism "tar" ("tjära"). Jenny Tunedal declares that Joyce's words in the new translation had become "more flesh, a fleshier flesh" ("mer kött, ett köttigare kött"), apparently much to her joy and satisfaction (Tunedal 2012).

Critics have also noted that Andersson is more specific and avoids generalization in his translation. Tina Nordlund-Hessler illustrates this observation with an example where Warburton's "two beers" ("två öl") and "one steak with cabbage" ("en biff med kål") corresponded to the more precise "two stouts" ("två stouts") and "one corned beef with cabbage" (en hackbiff med kål") (Nordlund-Hessler 2012) in Andersson's version. On the other hand, Nordlund-Hessler points out that Andersson's translation is far from a strictly word-for-word transfer from the original. Instead, her general impression is that Andersson, above all, aimed at capturing the spirit or emotion of each sentence. This aspect is praised by most reviewers, for example by Danius, who stresses how impressed she is with how successfully Andersson recreated a particularly difficult aspect of Joyce's prose; that is, his sensuality and ingeniousness ("sinnligheten och fyndigheten") (Danius 2012). Other critics

also applaud Andersson's use of creativity and humor, for example, when reproducing the various styles of the original, its lengthy enumerations, and intricate word formations. Another characteristic of Andersson's prose that has received a great deal of positive acclamation was his sensitivity to rhyme and rhythm. Svensson finds Andersson's translation "an even more powerful and consistent focus on the oral acrobatic and verbal equilibrium, the burlesque and childish joy of words" ("en än kraftfullare och mer konsekvent satsning på oralakrobatiken och verbal-ekvilibristiken, den burleska och barnsliga ordglädjen") (Svensson 2012). In Balgård's view, however, Warburton's version is the more source oriented of the two translation, as it reproduces "a sort of Joycean staccato" ("ett slags Joyceskt staccato") (Balgård 2012), whereas Andersson's rendering runs smother.

Most reviews include direct quotes from the Swedish translation(s), which are often presented next to the English original. The passages cited are strikingly varied and are most frequently used to illustrate the critics' praise of Andersson's impressive linguistic skills. Needless to say, these comparisons are often anecdotal, which the reviewers are well aware of. Most often, the outcome of the comparisons is to Andersson's advantage.

Specific comments as to how Andersson deals with the different registers in the novel are few but divergent. One reviewer approves of Andersson's use of the West Swedish *västgötska* dialect (Balgård 2012), whereas another complains about a translation solution which, in his opinion, reminded the critic too much of a stereotypical accent of Southern Stockholm ("Söderslang") (Petdersen 2012). The most frequently cited example is the famous passage where, late at night, Leopold Bloom finally returns back home to Eccles Street and kisses his wife's behind: "He kissed the plump mellow yellow smellow melons of her rump, on each plump melonous hemispehere, in their mellow yellow furrow, with obscure prolonged provocative melonsmellonous osculation." (Olofsson 2012). Here, Andersson chooses to give priority to the rhyme and rhythm of the original, for example, by changing the English *melons* to the Swedish word for *pumpkin* ("pumpa"): "Han kysste hennes rumpas buktiga fruktiga luktiga pumpagump, på vardera buktande pumphemisfären, i deras buktiga fruktiga fukt, med smygande utmanande pumpfuktiga stusskyssar." (Olofsson 2012).

In the concluding section of her review, Danius regrets that a characteristic feature of Joyce's unconventional style has been normalized in the retranslation. In Joyce's writing, she explains, inanimate objects and body parts tend to function as subjects of the clause. By using this 'close-up' technique, borrowed from film industry, Joyce is able to elevate the significance of inanimate objects to a level that is on par with human characters. Ultimately, this way of writing invites the reader to adopt an alternative perspective of the world. Danius illustrates her argument with an example from the passage where Molly is having breakfast: "Her spoon ceased to stir up the sugar. She gazed straight before her, inhaling through her arched nostrils." Here, Andersson has restructured the sentence and opted for a more banal solution: "Hon slutade att röra ut sockret med skeden. Hon såg rakt framför sig, drog in luft med de välvda näsborrarna." Instead of letting the 'spoon' remain the subject of the first sentence, as in Joyce's original, the Swedish version employs 'She' ("Hon" '—Molly) as the subject of both sentences. The Swedish reader is thus denied the 'zooming in' effect on the spoon, which is present in the original. Although Danius states that she does not want to judge Andersson's rendering as incorrect, she finds it "fairly blunt" ("tämligen trubbig") (Danius 2012). In her view, it is unnecessary for the translator to tone down the author's unusual style, even though she notes that such a change of perspective on behalf of the translator occurs only rarely in the retranslation.

It is also easy to agree with Tommy Olofsson, associate professor of literature at Linnaeus University and author of a monograph on the early reception of Joyce's work in Sweden, when he praises Warburton's solution in the beginning of Episode 14, where Bloom visits the maternity hospital. Olofsson initially questions Andersson's strategy of using a broken syntax as in the original to recreate the impression of an awkward English translation of a Latin text, finding it "a bit too high-spirited" ("lite väl studentikos") (Olofsson 2012). Then Olofsson moves on to the exclamations "Hoopsa, boyaboy, hoopsa! Hoopsa, boyaboy, hoopsa! Hoopsa, boyaboy, hoopsa!", admitting that he always interpreted it as "a praise to the blessing of intercourse and as a description of what might lead to the maternity

ward" ("en lovprisning av samlagets välsignelser och som en beskrivning av vad som kan föra till BB") (Olofsson 2012). In other words, Olofsson interprets this as a discreet indication of where Bloom will end up a bit further on in the episode. Olofsson remarks that this reading corresponds to Warburton's "Åhejåhå, pojkeenpojke, åhejåhå! Åjehåhå, pojkeenpojke, åhejåhå! Åhejåhå, pojkeenpojke, åhejåhå!" where the groans of the lovers' encounter and their desire to conceive a boy are quite evident. Olofsson remains perplexed by Andersson's translation, and claims to be unsure how to interpret "Hoppalanta lilla gosse hoppalanta! Hoppalanta lilla gosse hoppalanta! Hoppalanta lilla gosse hoppalanta!"

4. Concluding Remarks

The release of the Swedish retranslation of *Ulysses* was an event that was meticulously prepared for, with a marketing campaign that had already begun while the translation was in progress. In this respect, the translator, Erik Andersson, was certainly a major contributor to the success story of the new version of Joyce's extraordinary novel. His translation, which was unanimously praised by Swedish critics, was certainly his major contribution. But other contributions that he made should not be neglected, however. After the commotion caused in connection with his translation of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Andersson was familiar to the public and somewhat of a "celebrity translator" ("kändisöversättare"). Apart from the many interviews that were published in the press, he also participated in various literary events, for example, in book discussions or readings. The only Swedish TV program dedicated to literature, *Babel*, included a feature with Andersson in Dublin where he visited different locations that are connected to the novel. From a marketing point of view, it also turned out to be a wise choice to launch the translator's commentary in conjunction with the novel, as it surely increased the news coverage of the book.

According to the Swedish critics, the present value of the book relies on its focus on the everyday life of ordinary people, sensuality, love, and reconciliation. In this respect, they have adopted the ideas of Richard Ellmann, one of the most influential of Joyce critics, "who presented the world with a humanist Joyce" (Brooker 2014, p. 27). Moreover, Swedish critics have praised the linguistic aspects of the work, for example, the author's predilection for puns, jokes, and the use of various styles. Many of the topics that are addressed in the postscript by Farran-Lee also appear in the reviews in the daily press. Even though many critics admit that the novel is difficult to read, no one has questioned the relevance of a new translation.

In this respect, the critic has slightly changed from when the first Swedish translation was received. At the time, it was above all the formal aspects of the novel and the uncompromising attitude of the author, who wanted to include all aspects of human behavior, which were cherished. Nordwall-Ehrlow (1986, p. 63) suggests that the modernistic experimental features perhaps were considered as something real new when the Swedish version was published and that this circumstance could explain the enthusiasm on behalf of the critics for the novel's unconventional style. With regards to content, on the other hand, voices were raised against the lack of a proper message in the novel and its focus on trivial matters of the life of ordinary people. Some sixty years later, these characteristics were instead described in positive terms. Otherwise, most themes raised in the reviews in 2012 were present already in the critic from 1946.

Whereas the postscript of the new translation does not comment on the translation, the majority of the reviews contained a positive evaluation of the translator's work, as can be seen in the titles of many reviews, but also in extended comments, generally towards the end of the text. Normally, book reviews do not include lengthy remarks related to the translation (Gullin 2002). When the critic presents a review of a book which has been already translated, it is of course easier for the critic to comment on the translation. There might even be a certain expectation on behalf of the reader of the review that the reviewer addresses a number of differences between the translations. It is thus not so surprising that the reviews of the Swedish retranslation of *Ulysses* allocate space for the provision of comparisons with the original, the previous translation, or both. It should, however, be mentioned that the reviews that were published in the 1940's also include extensive remarks on the translation

(Bladh 2014), which is not surprising, given that this novel poses a particularly challenging task for the translator.

In a certain sense, the new Swedish version can be considered to conform to the "retranslation hypothesis" (Berman 1990; Paliposki and Koskinen 2004), which claims that a translation of a text which has already been translated into a particular language will tend to be more source-oriented, compared to the previous translation. In the case of *Ulysses*, this tendency of staying closer to the original reveals itself both in the layout, which reproduces the design and colour of the first British edition, and in the translator's personal style. A style which, according to a majority of the critics, renders the expression of the author more faithfully. However, if the "retranslation hypothesis" *is* to apply, one would expect the new version to be more literal than the first translation. As many reviewers have observed, the faithfulness referred to above does not take the form of a word-for-word translation, even though some examples quoted by critics are more formally closer to the original in Andersson's version compared to the corresponding solutions in Warburton's translation. Instead, faithfulness can be identified at the level of the "spirit" of the original novel. There is nothing unidiomatic about Andersson's translation, and he was especially praised for his way of reproducing Joyce's puns, "verbal equilibristic" ("verbalekvilibristiken") (Svensson 2012), and raw language. As Danius remarks, this is how Joyce would have expressed himself, had he Swedish as a mother tongue.

There is no consensus among the critics about the function of the retranslation, whether it replaces or supplements the first translation by enriching the Swedish reading community with yet another interpretation of this modernistic classic. Interestingly, a new edition of the 1993 version of *Odysseus*, produced by the translator of the first Swedish translation (Joyce 2018), was recently published by Modernista, a publishing house which has come to specialize in reprinting old translations of literary classics usually quite soon after a new translation has been released. This is an activity that they have been severely criticized for by Joyce translator and scholar Tommy Olofsson (2018). In his opinion, reprints of former translations are a nuisance and cannot be justified by referring to their "historical value", as claimed by Henrik Pedersen, editor at Modernista. Olofsson considers these new editions as unfair competition, since the cost involved in publishing such editions is considerably lower compared to the investment that is required for a new translation. He moreover claims that Swedish readers do not care if they read the most recent translation of a book and that they would merely buy the cheapest version.

The publication of old translations shortly after the release of a retranslation does not seem to be a uniquely Swedish phenomenon. In a recent volume on British retranslations of two novels by French 19th-century writers Gustave Flaubert and Georges Sand, it is in the case with *Madame Bovary* striking to what extent older versions regularly reappear when a new translation is introduced. This is particularly salient with the first version by Eleanor Marx-Aveling from 1886, which accompanies all of the seven other retranslations, including the last one from 2011. However, Sharon Deane-Cox (2014) does not seem to interpret this habit as a threat to future retranslations. When she discusses the issue of coexistence of multiple versions, it becomes clear that the opposite perspective seems prevailing in the literature, with new translations rivalling anterior versions.

Neither is the topic brought up in *Perspectives on Retranslation*, another recent volume on retranslations studies (Albachten 2018). However, in one of the contributions to the volume, Müge Işıklar Koçak and Ahu Selin Erkul Yağcı (Koçak and Yağcı 2018) show that Turkish reader opinions on available retranslations are far from indifferent. Online fora and blogs flourish with comments and discussions, occasionally even offering lists with pro's and con's on different publishing houses' offers of retranslations (quality of the translation, design, printing quality, variety of books, etc.).

Could it thus be so that this competitive situation is only problematic in Sweden, a smaller language area compared to the two target cultures of the previously mentioned studies? It would in any case be interesting to see how the coexistence of several translations actually affects the Swedish book market. If Olofsson is right in his claims, the prospective situation for Swedish retranslations might not be very optimistic if publishing houses in the future will be less willing to invest money and

time to produce retranslations. In this regard, it would be fruitful to examine the prescribed reading lists of literature courses at Swedish educational institutions (schools and universities), as well as borrowing statistics of public libraries, book sales and online discussion forums.

As for the Swedish translations of Ulysses, Warburton was perhaps not wrong after all when prophesying that his version, after a meticulous revision in 1993, would last until it reached a hundred years. Time will show if the two present versions will ever have to make room for a third translation of *Ulysses* into Swedish.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer whose suggestions and comments have greatly improved this manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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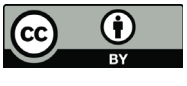

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Article

The Montage Rhetoric of Nordahl Grieg's Interwar Drama

Dean Krouk

Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI 53706, USA; krouk@wisc.edu

Received: 1 October 2018; Accepted: 10 October 2018; Published: 15 October 2018

Abstract: This essay explains the modernist montage rhetoric of Nordahl Grieg's 1935 drama *Vår ære og vår makt* in the context of the playwright's interest in Soviet theater and his Communist sympathies. After considering the historical background for the play's depiction of war profiteers in Bergen, Norway, during the First World War, the article analyzes Grieg's use of a montage rhetoric consisting of grotesque juxtapositions and abrupt scenic shifts. Attention is also given to the play's use of incongruous musical styles and its revolutionary political message. In the second part, the article discusses Grieg's writings on Soviet theater from the mid-1930s. Grieg embraced innovative aspects of Soviet theater at a time when the greatest period of experimentation in post-revolutionary theater was already ending, and Socialist Realism was being imposed. The article briefly discusses Grieg's controversial pro-Stalinist, anti-fascist position, before concluding that *Vår ære og vår makt* represents an important instance of Norwegian appropriation of international modernist and avant-garde theater.

Keywords: theater; modernism; avant-garde; Norwegian literature

1. Introduction

The dramatist, poet, and novelist Nordahl Grieg was in many ways the most internationally oriented Norwegian writer of the first half of the twentieth century. He sailed around the world in late adolescence (in the years after the First World War), he studied at Oxford in the early 1920s, and he published travelogues from Greece and China in the late 1920s. Grieg went on to spend almost two years in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, and he later visited Spain as a war correspondent during the Civil War in 1937. During the early years of the Nazi occupation of Norway in the Second World War, Grieg served the Norwegian government in exile before being shot down in an aircraft, at the age of 41, while observing an allied air raid over Berlin in December of 1943.

While in the Soviet Union in 1933–1934, Grieg responded with enthusiasm to new theatrical styles and techniques that he would later utilize in *Vår ære og vår makt* (first published in 1935, translated to English as "Our Power and Our Glory"). With this drama, Grieg brought avant-garde and modernist impulses to Norway in one of the decade's most significant and controversial theatrical events. *Vår ære og vår makt* employs a montage technique of contradictory juxtapositions, abrupt scenic shifts, and innovative musical, sound and lighting effects. The play shifts wildly in tone, from elegiac solemnity to darkly comic satire. Soviet theater was one of several international influences; other notable reference points include Erwin Piscator's documentary drama and Bertolt Brecht's Epic theater, as well as Noël Coward's 1931 play *Cavalcade*, which Grieg saw on the stage in London before it became a popular film in 1933. This article explains how *Vår ære og vår makt* employs what I will call a "montage rhetoric" to depict war profiteering and class divisions in Norway during the First World War, and to advance a revolutionary anti-capitalist and anti-war agenda in its own beleaguered historical moment.

"Montage" is a key term associated with Russian avant-garde film and theater, with Sergei Eisenstein as its central theorist in film and Vsevolod Meyerhold an important practitioner in the theater. While the play's borrowing of a montage technique from the Soviet avant-garde has long been noticed by commentators, the rhetorical function of Grieg's particular usage of montage has not been specified. By using a montage technique characterized by grotesquely contrasting juxtapositions, Grieg emphasizes inequalities and conflicts between the different the social groups depicted in the play, the ship-owners and the sailors of Bergen. These politically charged contrasts are also communicated through musical and stylistic incongruities, as Grieg draws on a range of musical genres, from folk song to jazz. Ideologically, the play reflects Grieg's conviction that Stalin's Soviet Union was the admirable land of the future that Norwegians should emulate: a bulwark against capitalist warfare and exploitation, in which class divisions had been eliminated and a new worker's society was being built.

In what follows, I will first explain the historical and political contexts of *Vår ære og vår makt*, before moving to a reading of the play's montage rhetoric and use of grotesque contradictions. Then I will consider the impact of Grieg's two-year stay in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s and discuss his writings about Soviet theater, as well as his controversial pro-Stalinist position throughout the decade. There is a historical irony, I suggest, in Grieg's embrace of avant-garde Soviet theater, in that it took place at a time when Stalinist repression and censorship was increasing, Socialist Realism was already being imposed as an official style, and the groundbreaking period of experimentation was coming to an end.

2. Sailors and Ship-Owners

Vår ære og vår makt puts forward a scathing critique of Norwegian ship-owners who earned a fortune as war profiteers during the First World War. Before moving to a discussion of the play's techniques, a bit of historical background is in order. Norway has sometimes been referred to as a "neutral ally" in the First World War, due to its popular sympathies with Great Britain and France, and its reliance on British control of the seas for security (Derry 1979, p. 303). These sympathies only increased as Norwegian ships were torpedoed by German U-boats in the course of the war. Through neutral, Norway derived profits from the warring great powers, who purchased raw materials and requisitioned ships. Norwegian pyrite and copper became highly valuable in wartime, while the value of ships could often increase by up to six times (Furre 1992, p. 57). During the boom years (*jobbetiden*) early in the war, Norwegian war profiteers and ship-owners could made heaps of money while wage rates remained static. The cost of living grew by 280 percent over the four war years (Derry 1979, p. 305). As *nouveaux riches* ship-owners and investors gained handsomely, they ignored the social and economic conditions of the workers and crews. Nine hundred Norwegian ships were lost in shipwrecks during the war, and 2000 Norwegian sailors lost their lives (Furre 1992, p. 57). In 1918, the Norwegian labor party (*Arbeiderpartiet*) gave voice to the social unrest heightened by this situation and passed a motion supporting "revolutionary mass action" (Derry 1979, p. 306). By the time Grieg was writing his play in 1935, however, *Arbeiderpartiet* had changed its course and become a reformist, Social Democratic party.

In selecting this difficult aspect of recent Norwegian history as the topic of his drama, Grieg was intentionally spotlighting a tense issue, especially for the local Bergen audience. As part of his archival research when writing the drama, Grieg studied old wartime issues of the Bergen-based leftist newspaper *Arbeidet*. Here he encountered reports about an espionage case that he remembered from his youth in the city, which he then incorporated into the story (Hoem 1989, p. 198). He also scoured the right-leaning newspapers from the war years to find arguments to give to the bourgeois character in his play. In an interview with *Arbeidet* in March of 1935, Grieg observed that "reality is in its grotesque brutality so much worse than anything anyone could sit and think up, that you would have to be stupid not to make use of old newspapers and archives" ("virkeligheten er i sin groteske råskap så meget veldigere enn noe menneske kan sitte og pønske ut at man måtte være meget dum om man ikke tok avisårgangene or arkivene til hjelp") (Vold 1983, pp. 110–11). Another aspect of

his research involved spending time talking to old sailors at the homeless shelters and near the Fish Market in Bergen.

At a more general level, *Vår ære og vår makt* sounds an alarm for its own time about a looming war desired by capitalists, investors, and profiteers. It was the first piece of literature Grieg wrote after his Soviet trip, and the first of three political dramas he wrote in the 1930s, followed by *Men imorgen*—(*But Tomorrow*—, 1936) and *Nederlaget* (*The Defeat*, 1937). Although he originally planned it as a film manuscript, the theater director Hans Jacob Nilsen at *Den Nationale Scene* in Bergen convinced Grieg to write a play instead, overcoming his doubts about theater after the bad reception of *Atlanterhavet* (The Atlantic) in 1932 (Hoem 1989, p. 195). Nilsen has been credited with turning *Den Nationale Scene* into a significant site of avant-garde theater in 1930s Norway, and he was instrumental in bringing *Vår ære og vår makt* to the stage for its Bergen premiere in May 1935 (Dahl 1984, p. 427). As the theater director from 1934 to 1939, Nilsen showed an interest in anti-fascist plays, having started his directorship with Pär Lagerkvist's *Bödeln* (The Hangman), a drama that highlights the barbarism and evil of Nazism (Lagerkvist [1934] 1956). Nilsen took an active role in the formation of the play, and without his support during the controversy before its premiere, the play never would have made it to the public (Hoem 1989, p. 208). Police were present at the premiere, and amidst the enormous applause, booing and outbursts of anger were also heard. Grieg's drama clearly touched a raw nerve, and some even saw it as a treasonous attack on a nationally vital industry. Nonetheless, the Bergen production went through 60 performances with a full house, and it was praised by many critics for its daring and innovation (Skjeldal 2012, p. 199). The play was performed in the fall of 1935 at *Nationaltheatret* in Oslo and the following year at *Det Kongelige Teater* in Copenhagen.

3. Post-Naturalist Theater

The use of montage, music, song, and dance in *Vår ære og vår makt* would not have been thinkable without the post-naturalist "retheatricalization" of theater that took place in early twentieth-century Scandinavia, as elsewhere in Europe (Marker and Marker 1975, p. 205). In the Nordic context, Pär Lagerkvist's essay "Modern Teater", from 1918, was an important anti-naturalist manifesto. Lagerkvist called for a move away from the domestic "conversation" drama associated with Ibsen, and toward a theater that employed a wider range of art forms and effects. His main precedent was the expressionism of Strindberg's post-Inferno drama. Lagerkvist thought that naturalist interior dramas went against the very essence of theater. He faulted naturalism for being totally indifferent to the presence of the audience, and for being overly focused on the spoken word at the expense of the modern theater's visual and lyrical possibilities (Lagerkvist [1918] 1956, pp. 11, 15).

In the Russian context, Vsevolod Meyerhold's essay on "The Reconstruction of the Theatre" contains a similar denunciation of naturalism, while it also shows an appreciation of contradictions, confrontations, and polemics. Writing in 1929, Meyerhold contends that the modern masses desire an emotionally rich and varied experience at the theater, not an intellectual discourse or a "debating chamber" (Meyerhold [1929] 1995, pp. 98–99). The task of the theater is to awaken and strengthen the life-affirming optimism of the revolution, and to give an invigorating emotional shock to the audience (Meyerhold [1929] 1995, p. 100). Meyerhold also notes that the taste of the modern spectator has been re-educated by the stylized productions of post-revolutionary Constructivist design, and that realistic scenery and characterization are unnecessary.

Post-naturalist theater for Meyerhold, as for others in the interwar period, was becoming musical and multidimensional, taking in cinema, revue songs, dance, and gymnastics. His famed style of acting, biomechanics, emphasized the physical dexterity of the actor's body and the reduction of story elements into tasks that could be performed efficiently (Pitches 2003, p. 73). The Italian futurist F. T. Marinetti had already in 1913 pointed to music hall, variety theater, and popular entertainment as the model for a vibrant theater in his Manifesto. This use of popular entertainment and energetic physical movements became a dominant feature of the Soviet theater aesthetic in the post-revolutionary years, in what has been called a "circusization" of theater (Senelick and Ostrovsky 2014, p. 185).

Similarly, the Norwegian *arbeiderteater* (worker's theater) of the 1920s moved away from naturalism to incorporate a broader range of theatrical effects, including agitprop and music hall songs (Dahl 1984, p. 422). As we will see, *Vår ære og vår makt* draws on these interwar theatrical trends by incorporating music hall, revue, jazz, and dance elements. It also makes ample use of diegetic music and song, including traditional Scandinavian sailor's songs and drinking songs.

In the avant-garde Soviet theater and film of the 1920s, montage was theorized and practiced by Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Meyerhold, the latter of whom was especially influential for Grieg. Montage in the theater refers to an episodic structure of successive, self-contained scenes, which are linked by abrupt and contrasting transitions, with breaks in continuity to keep the audience alert and surprised. In theatrical montage, stylized scenes and images are often juxtaposed to surprising or polemical effect, and two or more parallel storylines are possible (Pitches 2003, p. 75). Grieg's use of a montage technique is not radically experimental; the rhetorical purpose of montage in *Vår ære og vår makt* is never ambiguous or subtle. In addition, the play consists of a fairly continuous narrative told in a linear and causal fashion, and it does not approach anything like a radical breakdown of storytelling syntax that other forms of modernist montage might attempt. However, *Vår ære og vår makt* does have an episodic structure of two contrasting parallel storylines, linked by dissonant and explosive transitions. The shifts between scenes of sailors and ship-owners, labor and capital, produce a *grotesque* effect, in Meyerhold's sense of the term: a style based on sharp contradictions and incongruous elements that shock the audience and resonate in their minds (Pitches 2003, p. 61).

4. Grotesque Contradictions

Vår ære og vår makt opens with just such a grotesque moment of incongruity. The orchestra plays "Syng meg hjem", a sentimental sailor's song based on a text by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, while onstage a sailor's coffin is shown covered by a Norwegian flag. The elegiac image does not last, however: "The music suddenly breaks into a wild dissonance, like an explosion. The date '1917' is projected in flames." ("Musikken sprenges plutselig i vill dissonans, som en ekplosjon. Årstallet "1917" flammer imot oss.") (Grieg [1935] 1975, p. 123).[1] Grieg uses the device of dissonant sound to interrupt the commemoration of the fallen soldier and go back in time eighteen years, to a challenging and even traumatic topic in the collective memory of the original audience. This interruption suggests that the fallen sailor cannot yet be buried, because the reckoning with the past has not yet taken place. In this way, the play uses a visual and musical jolt to announce its intentions to explore a touchy wartime subject.

The curtain is drawn aside to reveal the office of the greedy ship-owners. Ditlef S. Mathiesen and his brother-in-law Freddy Bang have grown rich from war profits (ships, stocks, and speculation). In the opening scene, we see Ditlef refuse to consider a raise for the struggling wage-earning seamen, only to immediately give his secretary more than twice the seamen's monthly earnings so she can take a restorative vacation to the mountains (Grieg [1935] 1975, p. 124). Even more offensive is Freddy Bang, who has just arranged for a teenager he impregnated to have a secret abortion (ibid., p. 127). He convinces her brother, Konrad, to keep the affair secret in exchange for getting in on a money-making ship deal (ibid., p.129). Ditlef, who speaks in a broad Bergen dialect, is depicted as a sentimental family man who uses his children to soothe his bad conscience about profiting from war and putting sailors in danger, while Freddy is a lecherous cartoon.

Grieg's characterization has little psychological complexity, but this was not the point. He was perfectly content with the pedagogical and tendentious use of characters, since he was not interested in naturalism, but in social structures and class guilt. Contrasting with the unsympathetic portrayal

[1] *Vår ære og vår makt* was translated to English as "Our Power and Our Glory" by G. M. Gathorne-Hardy (Grieg 1971). The English versions provided here are based on that translation, but usually modified. All other translations from Norwegian are my own.

of the ship-owners is Grieg's sentimental and admiring depiction of the sailors and their families. One harsh critic of the play, Alf Larsen, even described Grieg's attitude toward the sailors as "servile" (Egeland 1953, p. 169). Such partisanship was not an artistic flaw, but an essential part of Grieg's polemic. During his time in the Soviet Union, he learned to shun ambivalence and the gray zone, praising what he saw as the purity of the post-revolutionary constructive will and the clear distinctions between contrasts. Grieg wrote in the essay "Teatret og livet" that Russia was a place "where love and hate do not flow together; where the climate is fire and ice" ("hvor hat og kjærlighet ikke flyter sammen; hvor klimaet er is og flammer") (Grieg 1947, p. 167). I will discuss this essay further below.

Many of the play's most interesting scenic shifts and juxtapositions occur in the second act. This act takes place on board a German U-boat (scene 2), then on board the "Vargefjell" during the torpedo attack (scene 3), then in a restaurant where Ditlef, Freddy, and others are having a party (scene 4), and finally in a lifeboat on the cold seas (scene 5). When the ship "Vargefjell" is hit by the torpedo, a scream is heard, the sailors Henry and Vingrisen identify the victim as Ingolf, and the scene ends with these instructions:

> *(The scream grows into a moaning, wailing death cry. As the curtain falls, the orchestra strikes up a music-hall tune. An actor, full of health and high spirits, comes forward quickly, and sings the popular song of the boom years: "Who goes there? Who goes there?" During the last verse he is accompanied by six chorus girls, masked as jovial sailors.)*
>
> *(Skriket stiger til et stønnende, jamrende dødskrik):*
>
> *(I samme øieblikk teppet går sammen, smeller orkestret i med en revymelodi. En skuespiller kommer ilende frem, frodig, full av humør og synger jobbetidsvisen: "Hvem kommer der? Hvem kommer der?" I siste vers har han med sig seks chorus-girls, maskert som muntre gaster.)*
>
> (Grieg [1935] 1975, p. 152)

The theatrical use of a popular melody from the boom years becomes part of the blunt political message: the greedy ship-owners enjoy their profits, invest in copper stocks, and gain insurance money from shipwrecks, while underpaid sailors risk their lives and fall victim to German torpedo attacks. The festive song and dance routine literally conceals the death of a sailor on stage, while the chorus girls wear masks that project the lie of happy sailors to the audience. The use of the chorus girls in this transition is both entertaining and confrontational. Being entertained by the chorus girls and the song makes the audience complicit in an act of concealment and forgetting.

In the next scene, the ship owners enjoy a dinner party at a restaurant with musical entertainment. Konrad plays the simple drinking song "Gubba Noah" ("Gubben Noak", by Carl Michael Bellman) on the piano, and soon the chorus girls join the party and engage Konrad and the uncouth Birger in "a grotesque dance". Also present is a Russian violinist, Sascha Erdman, who plays melancholy folk music for the group, after which Birger smashes the violin to use as firewood to warm up the room. The general message of the scene is that the ship-owners are uncultured and destructive *nouveaux riches*, enjoying their war profits and women while the wage-earning sailors are torpedoed at sea. After his violin is destroyed, Sascha Erdman gives a revolutionary warning: "There are many like you in the world: one day, I believe, you will all have the same fate!" ("Det er mange som dere i verden; én dag, tror jeg, skal dere alle få samme skjebne!") (Grieg [1935] 1975, p. 157).

The restaurant scene ends with a segue to the next scene via the word "øs", the imperative form of a verb that can mean "to pour" or "to bail out" (as a boat). The ship-owners want to help Konrad stay awake for the debauchery by pouring more wine: "Øs, Konrad, øs!" shouts Birger. At the start of the next scene, the sailors Vingrisen, Henry, and others are trying to remove water from their lifeboat; three men on the boat have already frozen to death. A frantic sailor shouts "Øs, øs!" (ibid., p. 158). Between these scenes, the musical accompaniment is a jazz rendition of the sailor song "Siste reis" ("Sailor's Last Voyage"), which is based on a Romantic poem about a dying sailor by Henrik Wergeland. The musical style gradually changes from jazz into "the real tune, played with all its painful solemnity" ("den virkelige melodien, spilt med hele sin orgelsmerte") (ibid., p. 157).

The use of jazz music in this case carries the connotation of popular entertainment, frivolity, and festivity, in contrast to the mournful tones of the organ and the solemn sea-romanticism of the original dirge. A moment of grotesque visual continuity accompanies the music, according to the following stage instruction: "the dead-drunk figure from the party have a sort of echo in the men frozen to death in the lifeboat" ("de døddrukne skikkelsene fra festen, har et slags ekko i de ihjelfrosne i båten") (ibid., p. 157). The montage rhetoric could not be more pointed: some are dead-drunk, others are just dead. As the second act concludes on the lifeboat, the sailors are freezing and longing for home, so Vingrisen sings a tune to hold up their spirits: the song "Eg har forlotte Bergen for bestandig" ("I Have Left Bergen For Good"). The young father Henry dies, but the others don't give up. Defiant in the face of the bitter wind, Vingrisen continues to sing his song as the curtain falls. In the final act of *Vår ære og vår makt*, Olsen's espionage is discovered, and a debate ensues among the characters about whether to blame the spies or the capitalist ship-owners for the deaths of the Norwegian sailors.

More important for the present discussion is the epilogue Grieg gave to the play, to ensure that the 1935 audience could not view the wartime events from a comfortably historicizing distance. He explained the intention of the epilogue in the following terms: "Now that a new war is threatening the world, I have wanted to address the problems from the previous one. I believe that in 1914–1918, we lost our high ethical position among nations. And if we have any hope to avoid repeating our complicity, then a real *recognition* is necessary". ("Nå da en ny krig truer verden, har jeg villet ta op problemene fra den forrige. Jeg mener at vi i 1914–1918 forspilte vår høie etiske stilling mellem folkene. Og skal vi ha noget håp om ikke å gjenta vår delaktighet, er erkjennelsen nødvendig.") (Egeland 1953, p. 164). The epilogue raises the question of who Norwegians should be in the future: complicit war profiteers, or ethically laudable workers against war. First, an actor planted in the audience stands up and claims that all this nasty business during the war was lamentable, but it was long ago. In this way, Grieg anticipates the defensive reaction of the Norwegian theater-goers and answers it preemptively with additional scenes set in the present. After the fake audience member speaks, a gong strikes and the year 1935 glows on the curtain, just as 1917 did at the beginning of the play. The audience then sees a scene from depression-era Norway: a homeless shelter full of out-of-work sailors, among them Vingrisen (who was based on an actual sailor Grieg met during his research in Bergen.) The next part of the epilogue shows Ditlef and Freddy standing in front of the curtain, discussing the desperate economic situation. Ditlef states that only *one thing* can improve the depression; it is implied that this would be the empty ships anchored in the harbor being requisitioned in a new war. Ditlef then opens a newspaper and reads headlines aloud: "Better Outlook for Shipping." "Will There Be War in the East?" ("Det lysner for skibsfarten. Blir det krig i Østen?") (Grieg [1935] 1975, p. 179). A wild drumroll starts up and the curtain is thrown aside. The stage directions read: "the whole play seems to explode in an atmosphere of speculation and war. On a moving band, soldiers approach with steel helmets and bayonets" ("det er som hele stykket eksploderer i en atmosfære av børs og krig. På et rullende bånd kommer soldater imot oss, med stålhjelm og bajonett") (ibid., p. 179). On one side of the soldier assembly line are the ship-owners and "børsmennesket" (called "Stock-Exchange Creature" in Gathorne-Hardy's translation), and on the other side are the sailors, a young worker, and a woman.

The play ends with the opposition of capital and labor clearly rendered in the division of characters into groups. While those on the side of capital shout slogans about the enterprising spirit and personal initiative, soldiers are shot down by machine guns positioned above the audience in the theater hall. Again, the audience is made complicit in the violence and death they witness onstage. An idealized woman-figure, representing peace, harmony, hope, youth, and human dignity, voices her opposition to the capitalists' greed and opportunism. "Stock-Exchange Creature" repeats "Better Outlook for Shipping". "Will There Be War in the East?" ("Det lysner for skibsfarten. Blir det krig i Østen?"), to which the sailors and workers shout a resounding "No!" ("Nei!") from a stylized ship-construction flying a Norwegian flag, as the sirens start to blare in a call for a general strike. Norway cannot be neutral in this struggle, Grieg suggests, and it is the responsibility of the working class to avert the

coming capitalist-driven war. The concluding sirens send a warning to the audience about the fateful, contradictory choices ahead, rather than an unambiguously positive ending or simple victory.

5. Soviet Dreams

Naturally, Grieg's play was accused of being revolutionary Communist propaganda and even "violating the neutrality of the stage" (Hoem 1989, p. 208). This is a predictable reaction, especially since Grieg had become known to the Norwegian public as an ardent supporter of the Soviet Union both during and after his visit there. To properly contextualize Grieg's tendentious play, we need to understand his aesthetic appropriation of Soviet theater as an integral part of his larger ideological embrace of the Communist project. When Grieg decided to visit the Soviet Union, he was not yet a convinced Communist. The trip turned out to be an experience of conversion and revitalization after period of exhaustion and pessimism. His 1932 drama *Atlanterhavet* (The Atlantic) had been a struggle and a flop, and it pointed to an artistic impasse. The turn to Soviet Communism gave him a new grounding: he wrote to his mother in January of 1934 that, "my stay in Russia has given me so much, new belief and new joy" ("Mitt Russlands-ophold har gitt mig meget, ny tro og ny glæde") (Vold 1983, p. 102). In the same letter, Grieg explained that the classless, patriotic Soviet Union should be Norway's new role model for revolution, just as the French revolution had inspired the Norwegian constitution of 1814. He began to understand his previous ideas about the Soviet Union as misrepresentations. Toward the end of his stay, he wrote in a letter to his sister Ingeborg that everything written in the Norwegian press about Soviet conditions—both for and against—was incorrect (Vold 1983, p. 102).

When he arrived early in 1933, the Soviet Union had just been through an intense period of rapid industrialization and massive forced collectivization under the first Five-Year Plan. Much suffering and hardship was caused in farming areas, including the persecution of the *kulaks* (relatively well-off peasants). In addition, Grieg's arrival in the Soviet Union coincided with the systematic starvation of millions in The Great Famine or *Holodomor* in Ukraine. The early 1930s in Stalin's Russia were also a time when cultural control was being centralized and social repression was heightened. Grieg was in fact present as an observer at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, when socialist realism was proclaimed as the only acceptable artistic style, ending an incredible period of experimentation and innovation in Soviet theater and initiating a return to the classics. There, he might have heard Maksim Gorky define the official style in terms of "the uninterrupted development of the priceless individual faculties of man" and the unification of humanity (Senelick and Ostrovsky 2014, p. 361). Socialist realism was opposed to modern developments that were considered bourgeois or lumped under the epithet "formalism", and it was supposed to educate the public in the socialist spirit. On 1 November 1935, only half a year after the Bergen premiere of *Vår ære og vår makt*, official Soviet censorship was reconfirmed in a decree: all plays, films, and other performances would be reviewed by censors at least ten days before opening, and two seats at each performance would be reserved for censors (ibid., p. 350).

While in the Soviet Union in 1933–1934, Grieg attended performances at the Moscow Art Theater and Meyerhold's Theater, among other locations in Moscow and Tbilisi. He communicated his understanding of Soviet theater—and of censorship and freedom of expression—to Norwegian audiences in his 1934 article "Teatret og livet" ("Theater and Life") and his 1935 lecture "Teater i Sovjetunionen" ("Theater in the Soviet Union"). In the latter, which was printed in *Arbeidet*, Grieg enthusiastically discusses the Russian directors Vsevolod Meyerhold, Alexander Tairov, Nikolay Okhlopkov, and the Georgian director Sandro Akhmeteli. In "Teatret og livet", originally published in *Tidens Tegn* on 2 June 1934, Grieg praises Soviet theater for its constructive will and its positive, edifying social role: "the same appeal is heard in everything: onward" ("gjennom alt smeller en appell: videre") (Grieg 1947, p. 166.). He claims that "criticism is tolerated in the newspapers here, but never skepticism" ("kritikk tåles i avisene her, men aldri skepsis") (ibid., p. 168). Grieg does not pause to consider who decides what forms of skepticism and doubt are intolerable but moves on to praise the

instrumental use of theater in Russia: "theaters are in the service of the new dawn that will come tomorrow, after the stage lights are put out" ("teatre tjener den nye morgendagen som skal gråne efter at rampelysene er slokt") (ibid., p. 168).

Noting that the present age is depicted rather simplistically in Soviet art, Grieg considers whether this might be due to censorship, as others in Norway might think. He corrects this false impression: rather than censorship, "it can be more correctly explained as a new life-feeling" ("det kan riktigere forklares som en ny livsfølelse") in which many cherished truths are dead, including those of Ibsen's bourgeois individualism (ibid., p. 173). A new country is being built, and also a "new man", and the theater has a role to play in forming this new world. "Teatret og livet" contains little about specific theatrical methods and techniques. Rather, it is concerned with the role of theater in communist society, and it shows both Grieg's openness to the political or didactic instrumentalization of theater and his defense of censorship in the name of affirmation and "the constructive will."

Part of what appealed to Grieg about theater and literature in the Soviet Union was that it represented an alternative to what he called "*forsiktighetsdiktningen*", a cautious, skeptical, and pessimistic kind of writing that he thought had become the dominant current in the West since the 1920s. In the essay "En ny verdensvei" ("A New Path for the World"), written in Moscow in the summer of 1934, Grieg named Ernest Hemingway and Sigurd Hoel as representatives of this tendency (Grieg 1947, p. 180). Opposed to such caution, Grieg lauded the Soviet literature of enthusiasm and action, exemplified by the futurist Vladimir Mayakovsky: loud, thundering words, at full throttle. His enthusiasm and faith in the Soviet future was at its height as he returned to Norway before Christmas in 1934. Earlier that same month, the Communist party central committee member Sergey Kirov was murdered in his office. This became the event that marked the beginning of the Stalinist purges, arrests, and executions. Grieg defended the purges that ensued after the murder of Kirov: writing in *Arbeidet*, on 9 January 1935, he dismissed H. G. Wells' concerns about the lack of freedom of conscience and speech, writing, "Of course, I can take no part in the dismay that most humanist-minded people feel about the mass arrests" ("Jeg kan selvsagt på ingen måte delta i den forferdelse som de fleste 'humanistisk' innstillede mennesker føler over massehenrettelsene") (Grieg 1982, pp. 41–42).

When considering this era, it is important to bear in mind that the rise of Hitler's Third Reich and the Great Depression brought pressure to bear on many people's understanding of Stalin's Russia. As the historian Mark Mazower has written, the Soviet Union appeared to many sympathetic, anti-fascist observers on the left in the 1930s as "a striking contrast to the West—an image of energy, commitment, collective achievement and modernity" (Mazower 1998, pp. 124–25). In Britain, for example, leading figures in the British Labour Party Sidney and Beatrice Webb famously published a tract in praise of Stalinism in the same year that *Vår ære og vår makt* had its premiere: it was called *Soviet Russia: A New Civilization?*, and it was reprinted in 1937 without the question mark (Kershaw 2015, p. 450).

Even after colleagues on the left such as Arnulf Øverland openly shed their Communist sympathies, Grieg maintained his vision of the Soviet Union as the sole agent of peace and justice in a Europe threatened by fascist destruction and capitalist war. Tragically, both Vsevolod Meyerhold and Sandro Akhmeteli, key influences for Grieg, were arrested, tortured, and executed within five years of the Bergen premiere of *Vår ære og vår makt*. Meyerhold's theater was liquidated in 1938 for being "alien to Soviet art", and he was arrested, tortured, and executed in 1940 (Senelick and Ostrovsky 2014, pp. 402, 407–8). Akhmeteli was arrested on charges of espionage, then tortured and executed in November 1936 (ibid., p. 441). This took place only a few years after Grieg was entranced in Tbilisi by his production of Schiller's *Die Räuber* (Grieg 1982, p. 56). Of course, Grieg could not have predicted any of this, and it is not clear how he reacted if he found out. It remains the case, however, that Grieg went significantly further in his defense of Stalinist repression than many other Norwegian writers with Soviet sympathies, both dismissing concerns about censorship and defending the notorious show trials. When the first news of Stalin's show trials came out in the summer of 1936, a group of leading Norwegian authors that included both Sigurd

Hoel and Arnulf Øverland made a public declaration decrying the death sentences as a miscarriage of justice (Dahl 1984, p. 60). Hoel printed a sober critique of the trials in Grieg's anti-fascist periodical *Veien frem* early in 1937, to which Grieg and the Danish communist author Hans Kirk responded in the next issue. Kirk mocked Hoel for having an overly aestheticized and academic relationship to Marxism (ibid., p. 61). In his February 1937 article "Dramaet i Moskva" ("The Drama in Moscow"), Grieg portrayed one of those sentenced in the trials, Karl Radek, as "a sacrifice for a historical necessity") ("et offer for en historisk nødvendighet") and saw in the trials a tragic inner conflict of Stalin's "will to victory" ("seiersvilje") (Grieg 1947, pp. 126–27). It was a task of the worker's democracy, he suggested, to minimize such collateral damage. For Grieg, Soviet Russia continued to be the bright spot of hope in a time of fascism, economic depression, and hypocritical bourgeois humanism, a position he expressed clearly in his 1938 political novel of ideas, *Ung må verden ennu være.*

6. Conclusions

Vår ære og vår makt is both a product of revolutionary enthusiasm in a politically turbulent decade and an instance of energetic, tendentious theatrical experimentation. Although *Vår ære og vår makt* has long been recognized for its use of a montage technique, Grieg has rarely been understood as an avant-garde or modernist writer. For example, he is not mentioned in John Brumo and Sissel Furuseth's 2005 overview *Norsk litterær modernism* (Brumo and Furuseth 2005). This absence is understandable, given that there is little that would count as modernist in Grieg's interwar poetry, which tends to be quite traditional in form, or in his novels. In addition, as a critical and historical term, "modernism" in both English and the Scandinavian languages has focused on poetry and prose, having a limited and imperfect application to theater and drama. It bears remembering, however, that the term "modernism" first entered the Norwegian language, in Grieg's own time, with a comparatively broad aesthetic and geographical scope. Introducing the concept in his 1931 *Modernisme*, Haakon Bugge Mahrt cast a wide net across the arts and across national boundaries: architecture, theater, film, design, and literature are all discussed, including Le Corbusier, Matisse, and Chaplin, as well as post-revolutionary Russian theater. Common to the disparate figures and trends Bugge Mahrt includes is an attempt to create new symbols and forms for the emerging modern civilization: all are signs an "en epoke som søker sig selv" (Bugge Mahrt 1931, p. 16).

In addition to its montage rhetoric, *Vår ære og vår makt* engages with interwar avant-garde and modernist culture in its anti-naturalist theatricality, its predilection for grotesque and dark satire, and its incorporation of jazz, dissonance, explosions, and music hall songs. Much of this was the result of Grieg's exposure to Soviet theater, although some of it belonged to developments in interwar theater and film more generally. Though not always a radical experimentalist or innovator, we might conclude that Grieg, with *Vår ære og vår makt*, became an important agent of appropriation and transfer, bringing aspects of international modernist theater and culture to the Norwegian stage in the service of a revolutionary political agenda.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Article

Agents of Secularisation—Ibsen and the Narrative of Secular Modernity

Joachim Schiedermair

Department of Finnish and Scandinavian Studies, University of Greifswald, 17487 Greifswald, Germany; joachim.schiedermair@uni-greifswald.de

Received: 7 February 2019; Accepted: 28 May 2019; Published: 3 June 2019

Abstract: In sociology, modernisation is often identified with secularisation. How can secularisation in the texts of modernism around 1900 be analysed? Literary history books tell us that the modernist authors were lucid analysts of their time who portrayed the process of secularisation going on around them in their dramas, novels or short stories. The article tries out a different approach: By conceptualizing secularisation as a cultural narrative, the perspective on the literary material changes fundamentally. The modernist authors were involved in shaping the idea of secularisation in the first place, in propagating it and in working on its implementation. They did not react to the process of secularisation with their texts. Instead, they were involved in the creation and shaping of the interpretative category 'secularisation'. The article exemplifies this change in approach using a pivotal text of Nordic literary modernism, Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*.

Keywords: modernisation; secularisation; Henrik Ibsen; Rosmersholm; Sigmund Freud

1. What Kind of Modernity?

One of the generally accepted notions of the Scandinavian classification of period is that modernity was introduced to Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish literature when Georg Brandes gave his first lecture in his series on 19th century European literature at the University of Copenhagen in 1871: Brandes propagated a decidedly modern literature which drew its modernity from responding to the pushes for modernisation that fundamentally changed European societies in the second half of the 19th century; he registered how industrialisation and modern monetary economics were putting mental frameworks in motion, how social boundaries were opening up, how women were breaking out of traditional roles, how Christianity was losing its status. Therefore, he called for a literary awareness that covers these four important issues: the unjust distribution of property, the social stratification, the relationship between the sexes, and the social role of religion.

The conception of modernity that nowadays informs this perception of Brandes (and the literature of the Modern Breakthrough) is based on a model of modernisation that originates from sociology (Van der Loo and van Reijen 1997): A modern society is characterised by freedom and individualism, by the participation of broad sections of society in the political decision-making process, by rationality and the facilitation of life due to the mechanisation of all areas of life. Yet, even the founding fathers of sociology, namely Émile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tönnies, Georg Simmel, and Max Weber, are aware of the paradox consequences and the strangely ambivalent state of mind this positively connoted process generates: Thus, the increasing domination of nature, for instance, opens up previously unimagined liberties, but the downside of power gained is the responsibility for the consequences which overwhelm modern man. The domination of nature by man also means the domination of man by man. By this, man himself becomes an object of science; he realises that what he previously considered to be his very own inner being, his immutable identity—in short: his soul—is of a contingent nature that can be easily manipulated. Thus, he becomes responsible for himself, for his actions, his attitudes in

a manner previously unknown. But, he has lost the authority (his identity or soul) that could take on this responsibility. In this sociological sense, modernity means the dilemma of the empowerment of man with his simultaneous incapacitation. Thus, in 1897 Durkheim coined the term 'anomic suicide' (Durkheim [1897] 2006). He uses the term to describe a new, contemporary form of suicide that he sees as characteristically modern: free, flexible, and negotiable systems, such as modern societies are, complicate the emotional integration of their citizens; this lack of integration sometimes results in a final withdrawal from this system.

Recent research in literary history rereads Brandes' ideas of a modern literature in the light of this ambivalent modernity. It is claimed that Brandes had recognised this modernity in its core and thus became the trendsetter and mouthpiece of a young generation of authors in Scandinavia who saw themselves as radical, and whose most important representatives, such as August Strindberg, Victoria Benedictsson, Jens Peter Jacobsen, and Henrik Ibsen, had portrayed modernity in its ambivalence from the outset (e.g., Heitmann 2006, pp. 183–90). In the last 20 years, research has resumed Brandes' four topics and identified them as focal points of the modernisation process with all its complexity and ambivalence. In the context of Scandinavian studies, this is particularly evident in the research on Henrik Ibsen: Gender, property, and social stratification issues were re-evaluated under the new paradigm (e.g., Templeton 1997; Detering 1998; Rønning 2006; Moi 2006; Evans 2008; Heitmann 2012).

Therefore, the only aspect of Brandes' catalogue of topics that still awaits classification in the sociological paradigm of modernisation is the way in which contemporary literature dealt with the role of religion. It is surprising that it is this topic that has been left unanalysed. The decline of religion is fundamentally connected to modernisation in sociological theories: Many theorists regard the detachment from a divine supernatural father and his supertemporal order as the trigger for the processes that facilitated the development of personal responsibility, freedom, subjectivity, and rationalism. Secularisation is thus *the* interface between the sociological paradigm of modernisation and the catalogue of topics that Brandes designed for young writers around 1870. One must therefore concede that the most important epistemic topic regarding modernity around 1900 has been neglected so far by literary studies.

The literary texts of the epoch are not to blame. Again, Ibsen can serve as the most prominent example. Religion plays a crucial role in many of his dramas: In *Keiser og Galilæer* (*Emperor and Galilean*; 1873), which, throughout his life, Ibsen himself considered to be his most important drama, he explicitly negotiates Christianity and its apostasy from a historical-philosophical perspective; and his dramatic œuvre ends in *Når vi døde vågner* (*When We Dead Awaken*; 1899) with the image of a deaconess making the sign of the cross; this sign concludes a story about a sculptor who had become famous for his sculpture 'The Day of Resurrection' ('Oppstandelsens dag'). In addition, numerous representatives of religion can be found in Ibsen's character inventory, in *Catilina* (*Catiline*; 1850), *Kjærlighedens Komedie* (*Love's Comedy*; 1862), *Kongs-emnerne* (*The Pretenders*; 1864), *Brand* (*Brand*; 1866),[1] *Gengangere* (*Ghosts*; 1881), *Vildanden* (*The Wild Duck*; 1884) or *Rosmersholm* (*Rosmersholm*; 1886). What is true for research on Ibsen holds equally true for research on Scandinavian literature in general: So far, secularisation has been neglected when it comes to describing literary modernity around 1900.

In the following, I intend to ask how this research desideratum can be approached: How can secularisation in the texts of modernism around 1900 be analysed? Firstly, I will have to approach this question conceptually: What do we mean when we talk about secularisation? For this, I will continue with the sociological model I have just presented, but I will contradict it in one important respect. My main hypothesis is that the mentioned authors were not lucid analysts of their time who portrayed the process of secularisation going on around them in their dramas, novels, or short stories; instead, they invested their own texts in the debate about how the relationship between religion and modernity should be thought of in the first place. Therefore, I will treat secularisation neither as a historical

[1] The theological aspects of *Brand* are addressed in the following: Cappelørn 2010; Gervin 2010; Tjønneland 2010.

fact nor as a sociological concept but rather as a narrative scheme. In this narratological approach, literature plays an important role not only in propagating but also in shaping what sociology later termed 'secularisation'. Treating secularisation as a narrative is such a fundamentally novel approach that this article cannot provide more than a rough outline of a wide-ranging research project. This also holds true for the second part of this paper. There, I will exemplify the change in approach using a pivotal text of Nordic literary modernism, Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. My analysis has a purely illustrative character and focuses exclusively on the way secularisation is narrated in the drama.

2. Secularisation in Crisis

In general, the term 'secularisation' denotes the shift from a sacrally legitimised society to a secularly legitimised society. The conceptual cornerstones of the term already began to emerge during the Prussian *Kulturkampf* in the middle of the 19th century (Borutta 2010) and were then discussed after 1900 within sociology as a process of modernisation. Thus, 'secular' was synonymous with 'modern'. Referring to Max Weber's well-known metaphor: the process of modernisation was the 'disenchantment of the world'. Therefore, secularisation is defined as a process in which religion might still survive for a while, as a pre-modern relict within modernity, but will eventually disappear for good.

This concept had an almost unassailable plausibility for the self-perception of European societies. However, since the 2000s, the calls have increased for critical analyses of this idea of secularisation. This is based on solid arguments. Ever since the attacks of 9/11, the self-evidence of the secularisation theory has been disrupted in the public perception. The conviction that Europe and the world are on their way to a privatisation of religion has turned into an outdated utopia. As a direct reaction to the attacks in New York, Jürgen Habermas, for instance, coined the term of 'post-secular society' (Habermas 2001; Joas 2006). Furthermore, the attacks in Paris, London, Madrid, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Brussels, Berlin, etc. probably do not permit a return to former certainty either. Today, the idea of religion's decline is therefore mere opium for the people. The fear of society's Islamification, materialised in Anders Breivik's attacks in Oslo, or in the German Pegida-movement, shows the crisis of the secularisation theory at the heart of Western societies.

In academic debates, one can discern two tendencies of critique towards the secularisation theorem: On the one hand, it is said that the phase of secularisation has come to an end and that, dialectically, the 'return of the religious' (Riesebrodt 2000) or a 'desecularisation' (Berger 1999) can be registered (Graf 2004, 2014; Pollack 2003, 2009). On the other hand, it is argued that the idea of secularisation is confirmed in principle, but that it must be specified in its premises and differentiated locally and historically. Thus, functional differentiation in the modernisation process, for instance, is criticised because of its supposed or actual teleological or at least unilinear character (Joas 2012; Krech 2012; Pollack 2012). Secondly, postcolonial studies and the awareness they inspired ensured that secularisation is no longer discussed as an undisputable global process (Casanova 1994; Cady and Hurd 2010). And thirdly, historical differentiation is long overdue: Obviously, the theory of a unilinear secularisation process does not even hold true for Europe when looking at the historical sources (Gabriel et al. 2012; Osterhammel 2009).

3. Secularisation as Narrative Structure

Faced with the concept of secularisation in crisis, literary studies open up a fundamentally new perspective by defining secularisation not as a historical process, but as a narrative structure. In recent years, Albrecht Koschorke has worked intensively on surveying and developing narratological approaches, which define man's perception of the world as being essentially structured by narrative—meaning approaches, which assume our understanding of the world as being mainly processed by narration (Koschorke 2012). In this context, Koschorke has proposed the consideration of 'secularisation' and the idea of 'religion's return' as two narrative structures of European Modernity (Koschorke 2013). He defines the term narrative structure as an abstract model, which can be regenerated in countless individual stories. Accordingly, a narrative structure can be understood as

an interpretive framework, which can incorporate individual as well as collective experience, and which conveys narrative significance to those experiences—i.e., turning them into a convincing story that can be shared. By repeating and thus concretising the abstract pattern of the narrative structure, the individual concrete stories reaffirm the plausibility of the structure. In return, on a superior abstract level, the strengthened plausibility inspires the production of new specific individual stories. In this light, 'secularisation' appears to be one of those narrative models that consistently helped to generate and then stabilise the self-conception of Modern Europe. The fact that the plausibility of this secular self-interpretation has been weakened in the last 20 years makes secularisation recognisable as a narrative structure in the first place.

Therefore, the purpose of any narratological analysis must not be to criticise the content of the secularisation theorem in one point or another, or to correct it historically. Instead, it is above all a matter of understanding secularisation as a narrative structure and, furthermore, a matter of describing its components and variations as well as assessing which of its qualities is responsible for its success and durability. Koschorke identifies two main aspects. Firstly, secularisation as a narrative structure has proven to be successful—meaning powerful—because it manages to incorporate opposing dispositions: Secularisation can substantiate both progressive optimism and cultural pessimism. It can be celebrated for the gained freedom and individualism, for the domination of the world through its rational penetration, for the implementation of democratic equality *as well as* condemned for the metaphysical disorientation, the materialistic desolation, and for the weakening of social bonding forces that it can cause. This means that the narrative structure called secularisation was able to convince on a broad scale precisely *because* it serves seemingly opposing positions of world interpretation and thus allows dissent within mutual borders; it offers both its opponents and its proponents a plausible interpretation on common ground.

The second characteristic of a prolific narrative structure that was analysed by Koschorke is its ability to even incorporate facts that obviously defy the general plot (that is, the narrative about religion's decline). For example, the massive influx of people to Christian revival movements in the 19th century must not be recorded as a counter-argument, but can be seen as a reaction to the loss of transcendence and can thus even be redefined as a confirmation of religion's loss of relevance on a broader social level: Piety movements as social niches in which metaphysical deficits are compensated. The plot-pattern of the narrative structure thus includes potential alternatives that more or less ensure the general structure's immunity to challenges by empiricism.

Koschorke's first outline of a narratological approach to the phenomenon of secularisation provides a useful starting point. However, he is interested in a basic reconstruction of the narrative structure, and not in its links to literary narration; his analysis remains general and is not substantiated by the reconstruction of concrete narratives. This may be surprising because any narrative structure undoubtedly finds its own form only over the course of an evolution that takes place in specific individual narrations. The narrative structure only gradually finds its form; it develops within the medium of countless individual narrations (in fiction, on stage, in film, in everyday stories, in historiography, in journalistic texts, in political speeches ...). Within those specific narrations, concepts, alternatives, and rejections are put to the test until one or more versions of the narrative structure are canonised in the collective consciousness. Thus, my argumentation is based on the assumption that both the academic conceptualisation within sociology *and* the fiction's testing of 'secularisation' as a narrative structure take place on the same structural level during the founding period around 1900. Both sides contribute to the configuration of the narrative structure by supporting it or by opposing it; however, not in the dependence of literature on conceptual discussion, but in the entanglement of both types of discourse. Thus, literary narrations of secularisation are not simply subsequent traces of a historical process or literary implementations of an already established theorem of secularisation. Instead, they are key players that participate in the shaping of the semantics of 'secularisation'. Accordingly, the study of the relationship between secularisation and literature should focus on the following questions:

- How does literature narrate 'secularisation' around 1900?
- Which different voices and positions can be distinguished and which specific literary means of cultural self-interpretation are being used?
- Which logics do literary texts use when establishing the narrative structure in order to make the theorem credible, to disavow it, or to elaborate alternatives?

4. *Rosmersholm*'s Schizophrenic Secularism

Henrik Ibsen's drama *Rosmersholm* from 1886 provides its audience with a great deal: a fierce power struggle between tactical politicians, a love triangle in which two women compete for a man, rejected sexual desire, incest, insanity, murder, visions of ghostly horses, the decline of an ancient family and, finally, a double suicide in front of the breathtaking scenery of a Norwegian waterfall. *Nordic noir avant la lettre*. The plot's main trigger is based around the atheist coming-out of a former parish priest: Johannes Rosmer, the last descendant of a venerable family which has produced officers, clergymen, and senior civil servants for centuries and which has essentially determined the fate of the region. This clergyman retires from the parish office and turns into a freethinker by reading works from liberal authors. Therefore, it seems only natural to interpret this story about the loss of faith as a secularisation drama.

Yet, although the focus of the story is on a renegade priest, research has yet to show any significant interest in its analytical potential with regard to secularisation.[2] This is also true for the most prominent reader of *Rosmersholm*. In his essay *Einige Charaktertypen aus der psychoanalytischen Arbeit* (*Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-Analytic Work*) from 1916, Sigmund Freud detects a prefiguration of the Oedipus complex in the drama's second protagonist, Rebekka West. Surprisingly enough, Freud is not interested in an analysis of religion, which is inherent in Johannes Rosmer's apostate story, although he himself had already recognised the Oedipus complex to be the origin of all religions in *Totem und Tabu* (*Totem and Taboo*), three years before writing his essay on *Rosmersholm*. Thus, if at least the logic behind Rebekka West's behaviour is motivated by the Oedipus complex, it is obvious that the liberation from religion experienced by Johannes Rosmer might also be potentially expressed in the terminology of the Oedipal taboo of murder and incest.

Therefore, I will first—very briefly—reconstruct the sociological variant of secularisation in Ibsen's drama, which I have outlined above, and then continue Freud's analysis of *Rosmersholm*. I hope this will show that there is a second, an anthropological version of the secularisation narrative in the play, and that this second version counters the first, i.e., the sociological one. This allows Ibsen to negotiate two different versions of the narrative structure 'secularisation'.

4.1. A Sociological Narrative of Secularisation

Rosmersholm develops its plot in two main lines that coincide at one particular point in the story. The first of these plot lines is characterised by making clear references to the contemporary political situation in Norway. The drama was published in 1886, two years after parliamentarism was introduced to Norway (Tuchtenhagen 2009, pp. 108–9). Henceforth, the country was headed by a government that consisted of elected politicians from the strongest party in parliament instead of by a collective of civil servants who were appointed by the king. This new political system of party competition also included the respective media that was able to form public opinion. Thus, Ibsen's drama begins with a visit from headmaster Kroll, a conservative politician, who intends to propose his friend Rosmer as an editor and writer for a newly established conservative local newspaper; as the descendant of an old and influential family, Rosmer could benefit the conservative party. The new paper is mainly supposed to represent an ideological counterbalance to the liberal newspaper '*Blinkfyret*' (Beacon).

[2] Analytical approaches can be found for instance in (Durbach 1977).

Even the editor of this very paper, Peder Mortensgård, appears at Rosmersholm shortly after Kroll's visit and tries to sway the head of the household.

This one aspect—parliamentarianism and the emergence of the free press as a means of political opinion making in a liberal democracy—will suffice in order to illustrate that Ibsen outlines a social context for his plot that complies with the same logics as the context which sociologists refer to as the 'process of modernisation' 30 years later—and which suggests that European societies had developed from being traditionally stratified to modern and functionally structured social systems (Rønning 2006, pp. 209–28). Rosmer's estrangement from God and his new conviction that people should and must shape their lives by their own efforts correspond with this social development. As Rosmer puts it: 'There is no other' power to help (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 244)—meaning no divine power to rely on. Accordingly, Rosmer's personal story of secularisation is embedded in the collective narrative of secularisation I outlined in chapter 1.

The second main plot line focuses on the relationship between Rosmer and his wife, Beate, and on his relationship with his wife's companion, Rebekka West. Rebekka had joined the household of the priest Johannes Rosmer long before the curtain rises—initially, in order to care for his sick wife, Beate. Rebekka had been raised as a freethinker by her adoptive father, Dr. West, but conceals this fact. Coming to Rosmersholm, she finds that Rosmer is receptive to liberal ideas. She provides him with relevant literature and paves the way for him to atheism. Rosmer believes they are kindred spirits in a platonic friendship. However, soon Rebekka would like to take the place of the lady of the house in every respect. To achieve this, she cunningly leads the childless Beate to suicide by placing one of the liberal texts read by Rosmer into Beate's hands. The text argues that marriage is only justified if descendants have been conceived. By hinting at the same time that she is pregnant by Rosmer, Rebekka leads Beate to believe that she, Beate, has to quit the field in order to guarantee her husband's future happiness. When the curtain rises on the first act, Beate has been dead for one year. Rebekka still lives at Rosmersholm.

This stable constellation collapses when the two plot lines cross each other: Rosmer feels compelled by the political conflict between headmaster Kroll and the editor Mortensgård to admit his newly won atheism. Kroll suspects Rebekka's scheme, forcing Rebekka to confess. With the help of this confession, Kroll manages to prevent Rosmer's involvement with the liberals. Thus, the political conflict culminates in Rosmer, a sincere person interested in freedom and liberality, being checkmated by the power-seeker Kroll. The fact that Rosmer and Rebekka commit joint suicide at the end of the last act by throwing themselves down the same waterfall Beate died in is an expression of their moral breakdown according to this interpretation: Deprived of their mission in life, which was to convert other humans to be freethinkers, they choose death, brokenhearted and hopeless.

In fact, this interpretation also fits in with a particular tradition within the reception of Ibsen's work. Dr. Stockmann, for instance, the protagonist in Ibsen's *En folkefiende* (*An Enemy of the People*) from 1882, finds himself in a similar situation (e.g., Rønning 2006, p. 212): He too, is betrayed by political friends, yet, at the end of the drama, he decides to fight against all odds. Ibsen repeats this set-up in *Rosmersholm*, but in a slightly different experimental arrangement, namely by using a weak character who lacks the will to resist. One reason why Stockmann persists and Rosmer perishes can be found easily within the argumentation developed so far. As a medical doctor, Stockmann is a scientist and therefore a representative of secular modernity, whereas Rosmer is a former clergyman and thus a representative of the religiously legitimised pre-modern era. His failure can be ascribed to his primal and therefore still influential bonds to Christianity.[3] He cannot get over his indirect responsibility for the death of his wife and does not dare enter an emotionally and sexually satisfying relationship with Rebekka—although such a relationship would be justified, even in the eyes of all other characters.

[3] Cf. for instance: "Indem Ibsen Rosmer zum *Pastor* macht […], erklärt er die christliche Askese, wie Nietzsche, zum Ressentiment aus Impotenz bzw. Ohnmacht, und verbindet sie mit Gesetzesfetischismus und Überich-Hypertrophie." (Hiebel 1990, p. 137).

Thus, the death of such a weak protagonist as Rosmer is to be understood as collateral damage in the process of secular modernity. This very short sketch must suffice to illustrate what I would like to call the sociologically motivated narration of secularisation embedded in *Rosmersholm*.

4.2. Secular Guilt

The second kind of secularisation, the anthropologically motivated narrative of secularisation, becomes obvious if *Rosmersholm* is reconstructed based on the notion of guilt.[4] By collecting the statements about freedom and happiness made by the atheist Rosmer throughout the drama, only very vague ideas about the subject will be found. Yet, one thing is obvious: Rosmer believes he will be able to get rid of his feeling of guilt if he gets rid of religion. His ideal: 'Quiet, happy innocence.' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 270)—'Happiness [. . .] is more than anything that serene, secure, happy freedom from guilt.' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 279)—'Any cause that is to win a lasting victory must have at its head a happy and guiltless man.' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 282)—'your happy innocence' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 290)—'Yes, innocence. Where happiness and contentment are found.' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 302). The Norwegian original makes it even clearer by repeating the words skydfrihed/skyldfri again and again: 'Den stille, glade skyldfrihed.'(Ibsen 2009, p. 418)—'Lykke [. . .], det er først og fremst den stille, glade, trygge følelse af skyldfrihed.' (Ibsen 2009, p. 436)—'Den sag, som skal vinde frem til varig sejr, —den må bæres af en glad og skyldfri mand.' (Ibsen 2009, p. 440)—'din glade skyldfrihed' (Ibsen 2009, p. 456)—'Skyldfriheden, ja. I den er lykken og glæden' (Ibsen 2009, p. 482).

One could rightly assume that being free of guilt is the result of the abolition of a judging divine entity. Within the play, this idea is tested but then dismissed with the example of sexuality: When the other characters are told that Rosmer has lost his faith, everyone is convinced that he shares not only board but also the bed with his companion Rebekka West. Whether it is his wife Beate, headmaster Kroll, the editor Mortensgård, or the housekeeper Madam Helseth, they all interpret Rosmer's behaviour according to this logic: As soon as God's punitive gaze disappears, the same applies to the guilty conscience; a mind freed of religion is followed by free love. This logic would fit into the interpretation presented above: Social secularisation and sexual liberation go hand in hand. But, although everyone else might think this way, Rosmer does not. When he learns about the accusations, he reacts indignantly: 'Ah . . . ! So you don't think there is any sense of virtue to be found among freethinkers? Doesn't it strike you they might have a natural instinct for morality?' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 257). One might see these statements as the new phrasing of old Christian austerity and thus Rosmer's atheist asexual freedom as self-delusion. Yet, one has to take into account that there is no reason for Rosmer to feel guilty—even if he is still influenced by a Christian denial of drives and instincts. For there is nothing going on between him and Rebekka. And, where there is no offence, there is no reason for remorse. Consequently, the guilty conscience that he thinks he can get rid of as an atheist must have been caused by something other than the Christian fear of sexuality. So, how does Rosmer define guilt after his lapse in faith? Which guilt is dissipated by his new lifestyle in which sexual abstinence is obviously an essential element?

To answer these questions, it is helpful to consider Freud's analysis of Rebekka West in his essay *Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-Analytical Work,* because Freud integrates sexuality into the wider context of its social function. Freud shows very convincingly that Rebekka joins a constellation corresponding to the Oedipal triangle by taking up her new employment at Rosmersholm: Being a young woman herself, she encounters a married couple that, owing to their age and authority,

[4] For my following argumentation, I owe thanks to the chapter 'Totem, Tabu og Skuld. Om *Rosmersholm* (1886)' in Atle Kittang's important book *Ibsens Heroisme. Frå Brand til Når vi døde vågner* (Kittang 2002). Kittang analyses *Rosmersholm* with the help of *Totem and Taboo*, but (a) he is not interested in the religious-analytical potential of Ibsen's drama and is therefore not interested in the concept of secularisation. (b) He interprets the relationship between Freud's theory and Ibsen's drama in a completely different way. According to him, Freud realises man's anthropological basis and, with the help of Freud's terminology, he shows how even Ibsen represents this anthropology. Freud becomes his template to read Ibsen. I, however, intend to emphasise that both Ibsen and Freud work on the same project.

occupies the position of imaginary parents. Rebekka lusts for the parent of the opposite sex (meaning the imaginary father Rosmer)—she herself talks about 'wild, uncontrollable passion' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 299)—and therefore orchestrates the suicide of the parent belonging to the same sex (meaning the imaginary mother Beate). The puzzling question challenged by Freud is, why does Rebekka first rejoice at Rosmer's marriage proposal and thus the fulfilment of her wishes, but vehemently rejects his proposal the very next moment? How can that happen? Freud argues that later on in the story, Rebekka is forced to recognise that her adoptive father, Dr. West, who became her first lover, is actually also her biological father. This means she actually not only broke the taboo of killing by intriguing against her symbolical mother Beate, but also broke the taboo of incest with her biological father, Dr. West. When Rosmer asks her to marry him, she shies away from repeating this taboo of incest with her symbolical father Rosmer.

I quote Freud: 'Everything that happened to her at Rosmersholm, her falling in love with Rosmer and her hostility to his wife, was from the first a consequence of the Oedipus complex—an inevitable replica of her relations with her mother and Dr. West' (Freud 2001b, p. 330). Ibsen's poetic achievement consists of illustrating the model that everyone experiences in an imaginary form during the period of initial socialisation, which is at the age of three or four, through his particular set of characters. In other words: The symbolical father (in Rebekka's case it is of course the mother) is always more important than the real one.[5] In whatever way the biological father might behave himself, he becomes a surface onto which the symbolical father is projected. This symbolical father figure claims the object of desire for himself and therefore has to be eliminated by the son. The desire to kill causes the emergence of a guilty conscience, which only then turns the individual into a human being who can put their immediate desire aside for the sake of the community. That is exactly what happens when Rebekka denies herself the rewards of her scheme. She describes it as follows: 'It is the Rosmer philosophy of life [. . .] that has infected my will. [. . .] Made it a slave to laws that had meant nothing to me before' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 301). Here—in a guilty conscience—lies the link that opens Freud's analysis of a single character to anthropological speculation about the beginning of all religion in *Totem and Taboo*.

4.3. Ibsen's Totem and Taboo

In accordance with the knowledge formations of his time, in his analytical essay on religion, Freud assumes that totemism is the archetype of all religions. All other religions and even his own period, which was critical of religion, should consequently be regarded as derivations of the one cultural achievement that was generated by totemism. Consequently, *Totem and Taboo* resembles the prolegomena of a narrative of secularisation which—and this is how one certainly can interpret Freud—reaches its desired goal through psychoanalysis. Yet, in contrast to the sociological version that was later canonised in Europe's cultural consciousness, this particular narrative of secularisation is not centred around a turning point where society's sacral legitimisation turns into a secular one. Rather, it is a narrative with an anagnorisis, a recognition. What is being recognised is that the process that originally created religion makes every individual a social human being, that phylogenesis and ontogenesis correlate—and that the core of religious ambivalence ('the simultaneous existence of love and hate towards the same object,' Freud 2001a, p. 157) will not be overcome by turning away from Christianity.

So, what constitutes this capacity for creating religions that totemism passed on to all following religions? It is precisely in the sense of repentance. In the following, I will extensively quote from *Totem and Taboo*'s best-known passage, in which Freud talks more comprehensively about history's first

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[5] Hiebel states the same in his analysis of *Rosmersholm* (pp. 145–46): 'Wieder ist die symbolische Vaterschaft wichtiger als die biologische, reale.' That is the reason why Ibsen introduces Rebekka's adoption by Dr. West. Rebekka's legal father, Gamvik, never appears, 'weil er nicht von der Aurole des Symbolischen umgeben war'.

patricide.[6] Its origin lies in the Darwinian primal horde which is governed by 'a violent and jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up' (Freud 2001a, p. 141): "One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. […] They hated their father, who presented such a formidable obstacle to their craving for power and their sexual desires; but they loved and admired him too. After they had got rid of him, […] the affection which had all this time been pushed under was bound to make itself felt. It did so in the form of remorse. A sense of guilt made its appearance […]. The dead father became stronger than the living one had been—[… The brothers] revoked their deed by forbidding the killing of the totem, the substitute for their father; and they renounced its fruits by resigning their claim to the women who had now been set free. They thus created out of their filial sense of guilt the two fundamental taboos of totemism, which for that very reason inevitably corresponded to the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex" (Freud 2001a, pp. 141–43).

Thus, the various religions are to be regarded as versions of the deification of the father as a reaction to an experienced guilt. Consequently, the basic feeling of guilt that religion is struggling with, derives—according to Freud—only partially from illicit desire, and most certainly from the experience of patricide which is being transferred from generation to generation—at least in its imaginary form.

In Ibsen's drama, the same concept of guilt can be found in statements made by the character Rosmer. This becomes clear at a point in the story in which Rosmer is not talking about his own guilt, but the feelings of guilt and shame that drove his wife Beate into suicide. In fact, he calls them 'grundløse'/'unnecessary': 'the way she used to reproach herself quite unnecessarily' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 254—'hendes grundløse, fortærende selvbebrejdelser', Ibsen 2009, p. 387). What he means by that is that 'she had been told that she would never have any children' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 254). Thus, Beate's feeling of guilt stems from not being able to continue the Rosmers' genealogical succession—a genealogy that is not only omnipresent to the residents at Rosmersholm, but also to the theatre audience. The first thing the audience sees as the curtain is rising is 'the living-room at Rosmersholm' in which the eponymous genealogy has an overwhelming presence: 'The walls are hung with past and recent portraits of clergymen, officers and officials in their robes and uniforms' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 223). Asbjørn Aarseth has called this stage scenery the most extreme example of an Ibsenesque effect of claustrophobia (Aarseth 1999, p. 174). There is also a second aspect I would like to emphasise. Even if the motif of infertility is well known as a punishment by God or Gods in the history of religion, it is in fact the opposite that is emphasised by Rosmer in the statement above—i.e., that these feelings of guilt are 'grundløse'/'unnecessary'. It is Ibsen's intention to demonstrate at various points in his plot that it is precisely this carefree attitude toward filiation (meaning the continuation of genealogy) that represents the crucial novelty of Rosmer's atheist attitude. The freedom he experiences through his apostasy is not related to suppressed sexuality; as I have shown earlier, he has little or no interest in Eros—no matter which way one chooses for interpreting this fact; what actually turned out to be a burden instead, was the duty to continue the family line. The text repeatedly emphasises that atheism represents a betrayal of the fathers. From the various text passages, I will quote only one: 'The descendant of these men here looking down on us … he'll not escape so easily from what has been handed down unbroken from generation to generation' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 284).[7]

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[6] Does this narrative simply represent a heuristic artifice that is supposed to make an unrepresentable circumstance plausible? Many commentators on Freud's work adopt this train of thought. Yet, Freud himself does not speak of an invention of fiction but of a 'lack of precision,' 'its abbreviation of the time factor and its compression of the whole subject-matter' in his narrative (Freud 2001a, pp. 142–43).

[7] Another example is Rebekka's speech 'Oh, all these doubts, these fears, these scruples—they are just part of the family tradition. The people here talk about the dead coming back in the form of charging white horses.' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 281). And Rosmer himself formulates it as follows: 'To me it seems I have a bounden duty to bring a little light and happiness into those places where the Rosmers have spread gloom and oppression all these long years;' to which Kroll answers sarcastically: 'Yes, that would indeed be an undertaking worthy of the man who is the last of his line' (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 259).

For Rosmer, being childless is—in contrast to Beate—no reason for a guilty conscience. Instead, the filiation that he is committed to represents the instance that causes his guilty conscience. The analogy to Freud is unmistakable. Rosmer's atheism proves to be something deeper than just a lapse of faith. Like Freud, he focuses on religion itself and furthermore, just like Freud, he recognises religion's basic pattern to be the divine idealisation of a dead father figure who rules the son through a sense of guilt. The freedom of guilt that Rosmer experiences due to atheism is thus indeed obtained through sexual abstinence. Not because sexual desire in itself is forbidden, but because sexuality could potentially continue the sequence of guilt. This succession can only be dissolved without a child. Remaining childless does not constitute the cause for religious feeling of guilt (like for Beate), but as the remedy against an anthropologically construed guilt. Rosmer, consequently, does not interpret his asexual relationship to Rebekka as a sign of pathological loss of libido, but as the beginning of a love that evades the system of guilt, because it is not meant to produce descendants. Rosmer refuses to become a father himself. The imaginary unification with Rebekka[8] through their joint suicide is the ultimate manifestation of this refusal. According to Freud, the history of religion is a constant variation of symbolical patricide and its remorsefully attempted annulment. Rosmer also recognises this connection. His anagnorisis leads him to the only rebellion a son can make towards his father that does not perpetuate the filiation of the father's power and the son's guilt. He refuses the identification with his father by refusing to become a father himself.

Finally, there is one further aspect I would also like to address: Does Ibsen give his audience any hints on how to normatively interpret *Rosmersholm*'s joint suicide? Should it be understood as a heroic rebellion, an existential break with genealogy's logics, with the original crime at the beginning of humanity, which inevitably enslaves man in a regime of guilt? Or, is the crime instead found at the end of the play? Is it possible that the joint suicide represents a crime against life itself, which is—despite (or rather because of) its inevitable entanglement in guilt—still precious, worth living, and lovable? Ibsen does not provide an answer. Of course not! But the question once again leads me back to Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, more accurately to one specific phrasing in the German original of the previously quoted text passage, which contains a certain revelational potential. After the brothers of the primal horde have eliminated their father, the following happens: 'es entstand ein Schuldbewußtsein.' (Freud [1913] 1999, p. 173—'it appeared a sense of guilt'; in the words of the Standard Edition: 'A sense of guilt made its appearance' (Freud 2001a, p. 143)). When dealing with an author who is as conscious of style as Freud is, it must be noticed that he uses the syntactic expletive 'es' (Engl.: it)—a pronoun that does not possess any semantic content. It is used, both in German and in English, because grammatically correct sentences require a grammatical subject—as seen in the examples 'it rains' ('es regnet') or 'it seems' ('es scheint'). This expletive 'it' hides the fact that a sense of guilt does not appear out of thin air. Instead, it needs a prerequisite; and this prerequisite is not the crime, but love and thus the obligation towards loved ones. The deed only becomes a crime when this obligation is violated. Thus, even in Freud's narrative about the primal horde, culture does not really originate through crime, but through love, which makes the deed a crime in the first place. Felix culpa!

5. Agents of Secularisation

I hope it has become clear that *Rosmersholm* presents two very different narratives of secularisation and even confronts them with one another. One of them resembles the narrative which was later canonised by sociology and thus became essential for the European perception of modernity. According to this narrative, the transition into a modern society requires the dismissal of any finalised metaphysical order—resulting in the ambivalent emotional simultaneity of freedom and alienation. It interprets the joint suicide at the end of the drama as collateral damage brought about by the process of modernisation. Nevertheless, if one approaches the issue of guilt, then one instead encounters a different model

[8] (Ibsen [1886] 1960, p. 311): 'For now we two are one.'

of secularization—a model that admittedly manages to abolish institutionalised religion, but posits religion's origin, namely the sense of guilt, as an anthropological constant at the same time. In this light, the suicide at the end of the drama turns into a refusal to transfer the sense of guilt that came from the original crime to a new son.

Furthermore, I hope it has become clear that Freud's psychoanalysis or the sociological idea of modernisation is not simply regarded as my model for interpreting Ibsen in the same way shown by previous research on Ibsen (e.g., Gerland 1998). Ibsen should not simply be understood as a clear-sighted observer of his time who recognised the society's process of secularisation and chose it as a topic for his drama. Yet, at the same time, he must not be understood as a psychoanalyst *avant la letter,* who already surmised religion's secular 'truth', which was later made public by Freud. Instead, he conceptualises different narratives of secularisation, he even confronts them with one another and thus puts their plausibility to the test. In this way, like Freud and the founding fathers of sociology, he becomes a powerful agent, who contributes to the narrative structure's composition.

By embracing the challenge presented above of thinking of secularisation as a narrative structure, the perspective on the literary material to be analysed changes fundamentally. The argument that suggests that Strindberg, Ibsen, Jacobsen, Lagerlöf, etc. should be regarded as lucid interpreters of their time, because they concur with the results of the sociological paradigm developed by Simmel, Weber, Parsons, and others, represents an anachronism, because it disregards the fact that the mentioned Scandinavian authors themselves were important agents of discourse formation. They lived before there was a social consensus that defined history as a process of secularisation; in fact, they were involved in shaping the idea of secularisation in the first place, in propagating it and in working on its implementation. They did not react to the process of secularisation with their texts. Instead, they were involved in the creation and shaping of the interpretative category 'secularisation'. Therefore, their texts should not (solely) be read as time-diagnostic sources but as performative-political investments.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgments: The article was translated from German with the assistance of Franziska Sajdak.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Article

Exile, Pistols, and Promised Lands: Ibsen and Israeli Modernist Writers

Irina Ruppo

Discipline of English, School of English and Creative Arts, National University of Ireland Galway, H91 TK33 Galway, Ireland; Irina.ruppo@nuigalway.ie

Received: 2 August 2019; Accepted: 12 September 2019; Published: 17 September 2019

Abstract: Allusions to Henrik Ibsen's plays in the works of two prominent Israeli modernist writers, Amos Oz's autobiographical *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2004) and David Grossman's *The Zigzag Kid* (1994) examined in the context of the Israeli reception of Ibsen in the 1950s and 1960s. To establish the variety of meanings Ibsen's plays had for the audiences of the Habimah production of *Peer Gynt* in 1952 and The Kameri production of *Hedda Gabler* in 1966, this article draws on newspaper reviews and actors' memoirs, as well as providing an analysis of Leah Goldberg's translation of *Peer Gynt*. It emerges that both authors enlisted Ibsen in their exploration of the myths surrounding the formation of Israeli nationhood and identity.

Keywords: Ibsen; Henrik; Oz; Amos; Grossman; David; Goldberg; Leah; modernism; Israel; Israeli literature; Peer Gynt; Hedda Gabler; translation; adaptation; Zionism

1. Introduction

The year is 1970, the setting is a Jerusalem school, and the dramatis personae are an irate teacher, the near-13-year-old Nonny Feuerberg, and Gabi, his beloved guardian and his father's secretary. Gabi demands that Nonny be given one more chance to stay in the school despite his 'limitations':

> 'What you may see as limitations, I happen to consider advantages!' She swelled larger in front of Mrs Marcus, like a cobra protecting her young. 'The advantages of an artistic soul . . . Not all children fit neatly into the square framework this school provides, you see. Some kids are round, some are shaped like a figure eight, some like a triangle, and some'—her voice dropped dramatically as she raised her hand high in the style of that famous actress Lola Ciperola playing Nora in *A Doll's House*—'like a zigzag!'. (Grossman 1998, p. 88)

By mentioning Ibsen in his 1994 coming-of-age novel, the Israeli author David Grossman (b. 1956) makes the Norwegian playwright part of an elaborate fairy-tale quest, full of magic objects and daring escapes. *The Zigzag Kid* is about identity, Nonny's and his country's. On his zigzagging journey into his parents' past, Nonny mentally travels to Mandatory Palestine and to the early years of the State of Israel in the 1950s. He discovers that his grandparents are in fact the supposedly infamous robber Felix Glick and (the equally made-up) Lola Ciperola, a famous actor of Habimah Theatre, which is the national theatre of Israel. While the novel's portrayal of Habimah as a cornerstone of Nonny's identity tallies with Habimah's overall significance in Israeli cultural life, the mention of Ibsen, rather than an Israeli author, comes as a surprise. True, there were many Hebrew performances of plays by Ibsen, as well as other European classics, but these were often regarded as less significant than productions of original Hebrew plays (Rokem 1996, p. 68).

A similarly unexpected nod to Ibsen appears in another exploration of childhood and the beginnings of the Israeli state, namely the autobiographical *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2005) by Grossman's older compatriot, Amos Oz (1939–2018). Recalling his late mother's 'strange and frightening stories', Oz compares himself to

> Little Peer, the orphan son of Jon, the grandson of Rasmus Gynt [who] as he and his poor widowed mother Ase sat alone in their mountain cabin on those long windy, snowy nights [. . .] absorbed and stored in his heart her mystical, half-crazed stories, about Soria-Moria Castle beyond the fjord, the snatching of the brides, the trolls in the hall of the mountain king and the green [daughters of the devil],[1] the button moulder and the imps and nixies and also about the terrible Boyg. (Oz 2005, p. 261)

The passage is longer than the corresponding lines in *Peer Gynt,* and the comparison must have been important enough for Oz to use it twice, along with additional references to *Peer Gynt* (Oz mentions seeing the play on a shelf and hearing Grieg's suite).

Both of these prominent Israeli writers include Ibsen in narratives dealing with childhood, bereavement, and the years immediately before and after the foundation of the State of Israel. In this article, I take these mentions of Ibsen as invitations to read *A Tale of Love and Darkness* and *The Zigzag Kid* in the context of Ibsen's reception in Israel in the time of the setting of the crucial sections of the novels, 1950s and late 1960s, respectively, in so far as it can be reconstructed from press reviews, translation analyses, and performance analyses.

What I hope to uncover through this method is an insight into the nature of Ibsen's relation to Israeli literary modernism.[2]

2. Background and Methods

While the scope of this article is limited to two productions and one translation of Ibsen, it is worth mentioning that the Israeli and Hebrew-language receptions of Ibsen are complex and currently under-researched overlapping fields. Their complexity can be briefly glimpsed by considering Giuliano D'Amico's framework for a study of Ibsen's reception outside Norway. D'Amico suggests looking at six points, namely geography (the paths of Ibsen's arrival to a country); 'local, literary, theatrical and cultural traditions'; translators, theatre directors, and other 'middlemen' who promoted Ibsen in the receiving country; the relationship between the book market and the performance history; the issue of copyright (which is an important factor when analyzing reception during Ibsen's life-time and does not apply in this case); and, finally, translations (D'Amico 2014). In a pattern which differs from the maps of Ibsen's gradual ingress into local cultures in various European countries, Ibsen entered via multiple channels as part of several ingredients that made up the melting pot of Israeli society. Jewish immigrants from Germany, Russia, France and multiple other European countries counted Ibsen as part of their cultural heritage. Reviews of Israeli productions of *Peer Gynt* referred to past European productions. At the same time, the Hebrew Ibsen, both in book form and in the theatre, predates the foundation of the State of Israel. Hebrew-language translations of Ibsen's plays were relatively popular in Mandatory Palestine, with the first production being *An Enemy of the People* in 1905 (Rokem 1996). The playwright's name appeared in several early twentieth-century Hebrew-language periodicals published in Europe. Ibsen's plays became part of the repertoire of several important theatre companies, such as Habimah and the Kameri. Thus, while his plays were widely translated into Hebrew, often by prominent writers and poets who were commissioned to produce a version for a new production, these translations were not the first source of the public exposure to Ibsen. This situation was not static, however. As Israeli society continued to develop, Hebrew-language texts and local productions, which included performances of Ibsen in Arabic, became more important than memories of European productions.

A further complexity has to do with the method adopted here. In line with my previous work on the reception of Ibsen in early twentieth-century Ireland (Ruppo Malone 2010), I propose a seventh

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[1] The translation reads 'ghouls', which is not true to Ibsen's play or Oz's Hebrew text, which reads 'bnot-ha-shed', which means daughters of the devil.

[2] I wish to acknowledge the support of the NUIG College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic Studies Research Support Scheme. My thanks also go to the staff of the Israeli Center for the Documentation of the Performing Arts and to Gabriel Lanyi and Ciaran McDonough for their comments on the early version of the article.

area to add to D'Amico's six areas of interest, namely literary responses to Ibsen's work. As the case of the Irish Revival shows, Ibsen's influence on local literature can be far greater than the public exposure to his work. In Ireland, there were very few Ibsen productions, yet several prominent writers, including Yeats and Joyce, read Ibsen, reviewed his plays, responded to them in imaginative ways that transcended mere imitation, and engaged with lesser known and less immediately accessible aspects of his work. The two strands of reception, the literary, and the public, however different they may seem, are not separate. Yeats and Joyce in Ireland and Oz and Grossman in Israel, are part of the same 'interpretive community', to use Stanley Fish's phrase (Fish 1980), as journalists, actors, and members of the public. Their responses may be more imaginative, and may take more time to gestate, but writers too are members of the public. Writers too are readers.

Here, however, another factor should be taken into account, namely, the separation of the text from its author. After Barthes, literary texts cannot be seen as mere expressions of their authors' wishes; a text is not 'a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning . . . but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash' (Barthes 2013, p. 315). I would therefore like to refine my point. Not only writers, but also the texts that they produce are equal members of their interpretive communities. Oz's and Grossman's novels are spaces within which other texts, such as Ibsen's plays, are read and re-interpreted

The approach that I adopt here is intertextual in the sense outlined by Gregory Machacek in his study of allusion: texts are examined 'synchronically, in connection with a contemporaneous semiotic field made up of literary and nonliterary texts' (Machacek 2007, p. 524). Adding the literary dimension to the study of an author's reception does not turn it into a source hunt or a guess-game regarding the authorial intention. Rather, it allows one to enter a complex network of readership, in which each text in its response to Ibsen, be it a literary allusion, a review, or an actor's memoir, echoes other responses. New meanings assigned to the new author's work in the receiving country thus grow through reflecting each other.

In this article, I analyze an array of echoing responses to Ibsen that connect Oz's and Grossman's novels to the time of their setting, the 1950s and late 1960s, respectively. The concerns and tensions expressed in Leah Goldberg's 1952 translation of *Peer Gynt* reverberate in some of the responses to the production of the play. They also echo Oz's parents' responses to immigration and folklore, as described in *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, and help us understand the range of meanings hidden in the allusions to Ibsen in that work. Likewise, reviews of the contemporary Israeli productions of *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* are examined alongside an analysis of the story of Zohara, which, I argue, is *The Zigzag Kid*'s response to *Hedda Gabler*. Throughout the article, I use the words 'play' and 'game' when referring to the authors' and translator's engagements with Ibsen as well as their responses to the ideological trends of the time, a subject that I focus on in the concluding part of the argument. I do not attempt to formally relate the patterns of literary engagement to the patterns one sees in gaming (though this approach has been adopted by John K. Hale who used Roger Caillois' theories on games to discuss Milton's allusions to Ovid (Hale 1989). I use these terms because 'games' and 'playing' are appropriate words to describe a process that is both conscious and subconscious and that presupposes, as in the intertextual approach to the study of text, a kind of equality between the participants in the game, be they human beings or texts.

3. Amos Oz and *Peer Gynt* in Habimah 1952

A Tale of Love and Darkness tells the interrelated stories of Oz's childhood in the 1940s and 1950s and the experiences of his family and other Eastern European Jewish immigrants during the years before and immediately after the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948. Apart from documenting life in Jerusalem, the novel also ventures into Oz's parents' and grandparents' past, describing their life in Europe, especially the mother's life in the Ukranian town of Rovno. The suicide of Oz's mother, Fania Klausner, in January 1952, is central to this work, which is part memoir and part novel (Mendelson-Maoz 2010, p. 83). It is mentioned at its start and it ends it, functioning as both the framing device of the

work and its core mystery. The allusions to *Peer Gynt* occur in relation to Fania Klausner. It is obvious that by describing himself as Peer and his mother as Åse, Oz underscores his mother's influence on his development as a writer. I propose that these allusions have another dimension that becomes apparent when Oz's engagement with Ibsen is contextualized within other contemporary responses to *Peer Gynt*.

By contemporary responses, I do not mean contemporaneous with the publication of the novel, but rather with the time in which the novel is set. The play premiered in Israel in May 1952, just a few months after Fania Klausner's suicide and a few months before the young Amos changed his name from Klausner to Oz and left Jerusalem for a kibbutz. *Peer Gynt* at the Habimah was an important occasion in the Israeli theatre; it was extensively reviewed and debated in the press. The translation of the play into Hebrew was commissioned from the renowned Israeli poet Leah Goldberg. It was published in the following year. In fact, Oz refers to that volume when he describes the bookshelves in the kibbutz residence of his lover Orna (Oz 2005, p. 476). That is to say that *Peer Gynt*, in 1952–1953, was a work of some importance in Israeli literary culture.

3.1. Leah Goldberg's Translation

In the introduction to her Hebrew version of the play, the Lithuanian-born poet Leah Goldberg explains that she used Christian Morgenstern's German translation (1867), the Russian translation by Anna and Peter Hansen (1907) and the English translation by Robert Farquharson-Sharp (1897). She also thanks the Swedish director of the play, Sandro Malmquist, for giving her further insights into the text of *Peer Gynt* whose original language she could not access. Goldberg's rhyming translation echoes Ibsen's rhythms and is generally faithful to the original. There are some intriguing deviations, however. For example, while Goldberg uses the terms 'troll' and 'boyg' throughout the text, other supernatural entities are called by their Hebrew equivalents. During his fight with the mysterious Boyg, Peer exclaims:

> Var her bare en nisse, som kunde mig prikke!
>
> Var her bare så meget, som et årsgammelt trold!
>
> (Ibsen 1867, p. 57)

> Were there only a nixie here that could prick me!
>
> Were there only as much as a year-old troll!
>
> (William and Archer 1909, p. 86)[3]

In Hebrew the 'year-old troll' is a 'son of a troll', but the '*nisse*' or 'nixie' is *gamad ben-bliya'al* (Goldberg 1953, p. 80). *Gamad* means dwarf, while *ben-bliya'al* denotes an evil or wicked person, or indeed the son of a devil. The term brings *Peer Gynt* into the proximity of the Kabballah, Rabbinical texts, and Jewish folklore.

Mother Åse blames her fairy tales for Peer's reckless behaviour; she believes he has over-identified with stories about 'prinser og trolde og alleslags dyr' (Ibsen 1867, p. 38) ['princes and trolls and all sorts of beasts' (William and Archer 1909, p. 55)]. Goldberg translates this as '*shedim ve ruhot ve mlakhim adirim*' (52). '*Shedim ve ruhot*' [ghosts and spirits] are the names used in Rabbinical literature,[4] and 'great kings' resonates of the Bible. Even more striking is the use of words such as *shabbat* (Sabbath) and *torah* (the Pentateuch). When Peer Gynt meets the Troll King's daughter[5] and boasts about his supposed riches, instead of talking about his Sunday clothes, he refers to his '*bigdey-ha-shabat*', Saturday clothes (Goldberg 1953, p. 63), the play's Christian setting notwithstanding.

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[3] As William Archer's translation is far more faithful to the original than that of Farquharson-Sharp, I will use it here when a simple sense of the original is required.

[4] http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13523-shedim.

[5] The title 'Troll King' is not in the original, where this character is referred to as 'Dovregubben', the old man of the Dovre. I am using this term, which appears in several translations, for the sake of convenience.

The boundaries between Christianity and Judaism are similarly flouted in the final act. In the eulogy of the man who cut off his finger to avoid the draft (which Peer overhears upon his return to Norway), the pastor mentions that the man sent his children to school as it was time for them '*lilmod tora*' ('to learn the Torah') (Goldberg 1953, p. 209), which is an expression unequivocally related to the traditional *cheder*, a Jewish religious school for young children. Goldberg does not change the setting of the play; she does not turn its pastors into rabbis. Nor does Goldberg's use of Judaic terms constitute a mere domesticating of Ibsen. Rather, Goldberg expands the use of the Jewish terms to make them larger linguistic containers; she allows these terms to pertain to more religions and cultures than just Judaism. Subverting the established European paradigms in which various Christian denominations were dominant while Judaism was a marginalized and persecuted religion, Goldberg turns Hebrew and Judaism into tools for depicting other cultural experiences.

Other deviations from the original evoke specifically Zionist expressions. In Act 4, Peer daydreams about digging a canal in the North-African desert and founding a new country peopled with his offspring and named 'Gyntiana'. In Goldberg's translation, his Gyntiana is a 'young country', '*madina tzaira*' (Goldberg 1953, p. 143). While this is a literal translation of Ibsen's phrase 'mitt unge land' (Ibsen 1867, p. 95), it is also a frequently used term to refer to the state of Israel. Another even more blatant use of Zionist terminology is found in the already mentioned eulogy of the draft dodger. We are told that 'one spring the torrent washed it all away/their lives were spared. Ruined and stripped of all/he set to work to make another clearing' (William and Archer 1909, p. 216).[6] In Hebrew, the situation is more complicated: '*aviv ehad hanahal migdotav/ yatza. haam zanah et nahluto /akh hu hazar kekodem el sdotav*'. In the following literal translation of the text, the words with several possible meanings are shown using forward slashes:

> One spring, the river burst its banks.
>
> The nation/people left/abandoned its property/inheritance/heritage,
>
> But he came back as before to his fields.[7]

The use of the word '*am*' [nation, folk, people] in the second line and '*nahala*' (property/heritage) in conjunction with the loaded phrase 'as before' (that in Hebrew is related to the word 'ancient') are redolent of the Zionist discourse. They paint the picture of a land which was abandoned by its people and to which the hero returns in fulfilment of an ancient destiny. Neither the Russian nor the German translation have anything comparable. Goldberg seems to draw a linguistic parallel between the man and the *halutzim*. The *halutzim*, or pioneers, were Jews from Eastern Europe who settled in Mandatory Palestine in the wake of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which indicated British support for 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people' (Fromkin 1989, p. 297). Trained in agriculture, they came with the intention to cultivate the land. They were celebrated in school textbooks and depicted, similarly to the man in the sermon, as hard-working courageous people who built new cities in an unforgiving climate. Strangely, Goldberg conflates their image with that of a draft-dodger, a figure that would have been anathema to the Zionists of the 1950s who idealized the army.

The game that Goldberg plays with Ibsen and Zionism is not surprising if we note Adriana Jacobs' observation that for the poet, translation did not only serve the national canon, but also 'mediated relations between the immigrant diasporic world and the emerging Jewish national culture in Palestine' (Jacobs 2014, p. 480). Jacobs argues that in her translations, Goldberg 'created sites of resistance and polyphony in an increasingly hegemonic and monolingual national context, while simultaneously

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[6] Archer's translation is very close to the original, which reads 'En Vaar blev alting revet bort af Flommen. De slap derfra med Livet. Arm og nøgen han tog paa Ryddningsværket fatt paany' (Ibsen 1867, p. 137). The meaning of Farquharson-Sharp's version is the same as Archer's.

[7] All translations of Leah Goldberg's text, the newspaper reviews of Israeli productions of Ibsen's plays, and Shimon Finkel's memoir are my own.

inscribing their Hebrew writing in more international, multilingual, and heterogeneous mappings of poetic influence and tradition' (Jacobs 2014, p. 480).

Ibsen's trolls are meant to parody nationalism. In Goldberg's translation, this is taken one step further; her trolls might have reminded the public of the ideological imperative to buy only locally made goods. Oz, in *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, describes this practice as follows: 'We had an iron rule that one should never buy anything imported, anything foreign' (Oz 2005, p. 17). The phrase used by Oz, '*totzeret hutz*', is almost the same as the phrase used by Goldberg's trolls: '*tozteret shel eretz aheret*'. Goldberg, moreover, makes the trolls far more sinister in their contempt for imported goods than Ibsen. Archer's translation, which is close to the original as well as to the German[8] and the Russian[9], goes as follows: 'to our Dovre's renown:/Here all things are mountain-made, nought's from the dale/Except the silk now at the end of your tail' (William and Archer 1909, p. 73). Goldberg's translation reads: '*Kan bedovre—veze hesegeynu harav/kol totzeret shel eretz aheret taharam/hutz miseret hameshi biktze hazanav*' (Here in Dovre—and this is our great achievement/Any produce of another land will be confiscated'/Except for the silk bow at the end of the tail) (1953, p. 68).

An even more striking response to contemporary ideology is the following deviation from the original, also found in the scene where Peer nearly agrees to marry the Troll King's daughter. The Troll King's conditions are as follows:

> For det første maa du love, at du aldrig ændser
>
> hvad der ligger udenfor Rondernes Grænser;
>
> Dag skal du sky, og Daad og hver lysbar Plett.

Peer Gynt must 'never give heed/ To aught that lies outside the Ronde hills' bounds;/ Day you must shun, and deeds, and each sunlit spot' (William and Archer 1909, p. 70). In English, German and Russian[10], the emphasis is as in the original: on 'not giving heed' and on shunning sunlit places. In Hebrew, by contrast, the emphasis is on Peer's physical confinement in the land of the trolls. There is a sense of claustrophobia about the old troll's conditions as they appear in Hebrew:

> *Lo titze haim min haeretz hazot*
>
> *Vetihye shvuatkha neemenet aleynu*
>
> *Lo titze leolam et gvulot artzeynu*
>
> *Vetihye rak beyn elu hagiv'ot*
>
> (You shall never leave this country
>
> And your oath shall be loyal to us
>
> You shall never leave the borders of our country
>
> And you shall only abide between those hills.)

Unlike the translators she consulted, Goldberg dispenses with the word 'Ronde' and instead has the Troll King refer to the place simply as 'this country' (*haaretz hazot*) and 'our country' (*artzeiynu*), which are both words commonly used in Modern Hebrew to refer to Israel (66).

The implication of this move is shocking. Is it possible that Goldberg, who had shunned political writing throughout her life, chose the subtle medium of translation to criticize Zionism? While

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[8] Sodann mußt Du Deine Christentracht abwerfen; Denn dies laß zu Dovres Ehren Dir einschärfen: Hier ist nichts von jenseits der Felsenscheide, Außer hinten am Wedel die Schleife von Seide. (Christian 1907 http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/peer-gynt-1716/1)

[9] К чести будь сказано нашей, у нас, Все своего производства; Все, что мы носим, сработано здесь, В скалах родных; из долины, Банты лишь те, что у нас на хвостах(Anna and Hansen 1956, p. 451).

[10] Прежде всего обещаешь, Плюнуть на все, что вне Рондских границ, Света и дня сторониться, Светлого дела и солнца луча. (Anna and Hansen 1956, p. 450).

this possibility cannot be ruled out, I suspect that the intended subtext of Goldberg's deviations from Ibsen's original is more complex than criticism of the ruling ideology of Goldberg's newly established state. Goldberg is critical not of Zionism per se, but of the all-prevalent demand that the new immigrants negate their roots and let go of memories of Europe, their European culture, and even their Jewish-European identity. *Shlilat hagalut*, the rejection of exile, was a central tenet of Goldberg's contemporaries, and this demand was, for her, a source of tension. As Jacobs explains, Goldberg 'was acutely aware of how a "rejection of exile" conflicted with her ... engagements and dialogues with European literary cultures' (Jacobs 2014, p. 481). The imperative to reject the past possibly also made it harder, not easier, for the Jewish immigrants to accept the new country as their home.

When domesticating Ibsen, Goldberg made his play reflect not only the language, but also the tensions within her society. The Hebrew *Peer Gynt* is a carnival site where familiar ideals, such as fatherland, inheritance, Judaism, and Zionism, can be re-encountered, and re-examined in a new light. Through its encounter with Ibsen, Hebrew becomes more international than it had ever been; it becomes possible to speak of Sunday clothes as Sabbath clothes, and of Israel as a not just a place of refuge, but also as a place of confinement and exile.

3.2. Sandro Malmquist's Israeli Peer Gynt

While Goldberg's translation displayed both daring and subtlety in domesticating Ibsen, the performance was motivated by different factors. In the early 1950s, the management of Habimah decided to gain new experience, expand its repertoire and preserve its reputation as the national theatre through a series of productions by invited directors from abroad (Rokem 2011, p. 133). The Swedish Sandro Malmquist became a frequent guest, directing *John Gabriel Borkman* in 1953 and *The Wild Duck* in 1954.

Malmquist is remembered by Nava Shean, who played the Troll's Daughter, as having a great love for 'everything in Israel, from yogurt to the incomprehensible Hebrew language' and for communicating in broken English, and mostly through the medium of pictures (Shean 2010, p. 84). His approach to *Peer Gynt* seems to have been similar to that of Hans Jacob Nilsen, who declared, in 1948, that '*Peer Gynt* is no journey through Norway: it is a journey through a human mind' (Marker and Marker 1989, p. 25). Shean recalls that Malmquist's stationary constructivist stage set, around which Peer moved in spirals as if circling around his self, was meant to 'make clear that the play had nothing to do with a real-life journey from one scenery to another, but with mental drama taking place within one man's soul' (Shean 2010, p. 85). His use of projections, however, created a memorable visual spectacle, which was praised precisely for its ability to recreate various landscapes. Apparently, 'the stage resembled a huge [living and moving] painting, taken from an album of Northern painters' (Eshel 1952).

In fact, Malmquist's anti-romantic vision was partly sabotaged: he had hoped to avoid using Grieg's score, but the horrified cast of Habima protested: 'Our audience can recognize Grieg's music, like 'Solveig's Song', and will not be prepared to accept the play with any other music' (Shean 2010, p. 85). Malmquist was on the verge of leaving, but eventually conceded the point. Shimon Finkel, who played Peer, also recalls arguing with Malmquist. Finkel agreed that the performance needed to transcend the stagy romanticism of early twentieth-century productions, such as the one he had seen in the Royal Theatre, Berlin, in 1922. He admired Malmquist's choreography. However, he disliked the scene with the Boyg and tried to convince the director to remove it, though on this matter, Mamlquist would not be budged. Finkel was impatient to get through what he called 'philosophical' scenes of Act 5; he recalls playing them with 'excessive irritation, wishing to ... get to the last scene with Solveig, which gave [him] the opportunity to express one of the most heartfelt and dramatic moments in the play' (Finkel 1971, p. 151). Peer's reunion with Solveig, the tragedy of Åse's death, and the bathos of the Anitra scenes (which drew a lot of laughter from the audience) were key points for Finkel, making up for the 'philosophy' and other 'incomprehensible scenes' (Finkel 1971, p. 151).

While Finkel's romanticism was at odds with Malmquist's vision, it was more in line with what the public wanted to see. The use of Grieg's music was indeed complimented. In fact, the extensive reviews

focused less on the production than on the supposed meaning of the play and the significance of its performance in Israel. The reviews, as Freddie Rokem observes, focused less on the director's vision than on the idea of nationhood and on 'the ideology of the State of Israel and its concern for returning the Jews to their ancient homeland' (Rokem 2011, p. 35). Malmquist's attempt to contemporize the play by dressing Begriffenfeldt as Hitler attracted only negative comments (Eshel 1952). His exploration of the gradual bestiality of Peer's 'erotic imagination', conveyed through the costume of the Troll's daughter featuring two sets of breasts (Shean 2010, p. 86), was barely mentioned in the reviews. The detail was only picked up in the satirical review by Ephraim Kishon written from the perspective of a recent immigrant from Hungary. The play is recounted in a series of jokes about Peer being pursued by 'giant dwarves' in Act 2, carrying a boat with 'businessmen from Beersheba' in Act 4, getting arrested by Hitler for 'speaking Yiddish wheareas one can also speak Hebrew' and 'preaching Zionism to the masses' in Act 5 (Kishon 1952). His comical approach notwithstanding, Kishon was similar to the rest of the critics in focusing his review on Israeli life rather than the play.

Indeed, the reviewer of the centrist *Haboker* claimed that 'one can learn from the play a national message of our own':

> Peer Gynt goes around the whole world, and, in the end, he comes to Norway full of disappointments—and there: his first love is loyal to him. Can it not be a wonderful parable for our return to Zion? I always say that the theatre does not show anything Zionist or national, and here I see that there are no borders in the world of the spirit. (Unsigned 1952)

By contrast, Sh. Israel, in the extreme nationalist *Sulam* thought, the play was about 'the cancer of individualism from which the Jewish people could be freed' and that it embodied 'Europe that spat us out and that deserves to be expelled … from our souls' (Israel 1952). 'Sh. Israel' is likely to have been a pseudonym of the paper's editor, Israel Eldad (also known as Scheib). He was a former member of the paramilitary group Lehi and an advocate of the establishment of a sovereign Jewish kingdom within the biblical borders. This extremist reaction contrasts with the review by A. Aisenberg, who proposed a connection between Peer's self-deception and 'our life in our young country'. 'How many among us', wondered Aisenberg, 'dreamed dreams of worlds a plenty when they were young and saw themselves as their centre … and on facing the grey reality … were swept in the whirlpool of egoism'. For Aisenberg, the connection between *Peer Gynt* and Israel was in Peer's inability to settle down. 'One of the problems of the current crisis', he wrote 'is … the lack of ideals … half of the population of the country do not, at the moment, feel rooted in the places where they live. And has an educational atmosphere been created to stop people wandering within the country and outside its borders? Aren't the young people dreaming of leaving the country that was won by the blood of their fathers?' (Aisenberg 1952).

3.3. Peer Gynt and the Lost Promised Lands

What these reviews suggest is that *Peer Gynt* struck a chord with members of the audience whose own life-paths, as citizens of the newly established State of Israel, reflected the disappointments and frustrations of Ibsen's protagonist. In Ibsen's counter-romantic drama (Durbach 1982, p. 6), Peer's ambitious belief in the power of the self to transcend reality and fashion its own paradise is given expression in his tales of the Soria Moria castle and a folkloric land of his dreams where he is emperor. This belief is then subverted in the final act when 'with the eyes of a dying Moses, Peer gazes on a Promised Land which his own experience has turned to dust and ashes' (Durbach 1982, p. 9).

Frustrated dreams of a promised land is one of the major themes of *A Tale of Love and Darkness*. This sense of disappointment refers to both politics and the everyday. Oz describes his elderly relatives' unfulfilled hopes that as Jews in their own state, they would 'treat our Arab minority justly fairly, generously, … shar[ing] our homeland with them, shar[ing] everything with them' (Oz 2005, p. 185). Oz also describes his parents' unhappiness in Jerusalem. He recalls his parents singing Zionist songs about 'the land where 'all our hopes will be fulfilled'. 'But what were their hopes', Oz asks; 'Perhaps they …

thought they would find in the … Land of Israel something less … crudely materialistic and more idealistic; something less feverish and voluble and more settled and reserved' (Oz 2005, p. 242). This experience of Israel not as a promised land but as a place of exile is the sentiment voiced, as we have seen, in Goldberg's translation of the Troll King's admonitory words to Peer Gynt. While their viewpoints were different, in reviewing the play, many critics engaged with what Oz calls 'Worldatlarge', 'attractive, marvellous, but to us … dangerous and threatening' (Oz 2005, p. 4). Similarly, Grossman in *See Under: Love* calls Europe 'Over There', a place you weren't supposed to talk about too much, only think about it in your heart and sigh with a drawn-out krechts, oyyyy, the way they always do' (Grossman 1991, p. 13). Oz explains that 'Europe … was a forbidden promised land, a yearned-for-landscape of belfries … forests and snow-covered meadows'. Here, Oz mentions the very same words that Goldberg uses in *Peer Gynt*, 'meadow' (*ahu)*, 'hut' (*bikta),* saying that they had a 'sensual aroma of a genuine, cosy world, far from the dusty tin roofs, the urban wasteland of scrap iron and thistles … of our Jerusalem' (2).

The uneasy relationship with Europe can be sensed behind another reviewer's assertions that Norwegian folklore was alien to the Israeli audience of *Peer Gynt*:

> What do we care about St Peter that guards the heaven's gates. What do we care about trolls and ghosts from northern fairy tales. They can only provoke our curiosity; we do not identify with them; the strings of our times are not tuned for that. (Zusman 1952)

This sentiment seems to clash with Grossman's and Oz's assessment of their society's relationship with Europe. It contrasts, moreover, with Goldberg's decision to domesticate Ibsen through the use of Hebrew and Jewish equivalents for various folkloric and Christian terms in the play. Oddly, this reviewer, whose name, Zusman, suggests that he was a European Jew, describes the folklore of a Northern-European country as an alien territory. Yet, there is a sense of protesting too much; this is a forced negation rather than a factual assessment. The phrases 'what do we care' and 'our times' are appeals to the readers' nationalism and modernity. What is dismissed is not only Europe, but also folklore in general. Indeed, folklore was a controversial subject in these years.

While folklore was an important aspect of the European-Jewish experience, as reflected in the works of prominent Jewish writers such as S. An-sky (1863–1920) and, later, Isaac Bashevis Singer (1902–1991), the preservation of Jewish folklore was often criticized in the early days of Zionism. Preserving folklore meant keeping aspects of Jewish identity that Zionists wished to discard (Rubin 2005). Oz explains that his father's disregard for his mother's stories stemmed from his typically Zionist contempt for anything insubstantial and sentimental:

> Like so many Zionist Jews of our time, my father … was embarrassed by the shtetl and everything in it … He wanted us all to be born anew, as blond-haired, muscular, sun-tanned, Hebrew Europeans, instead of Jewish Eastern Europeans … He considered the supernatural to be the domain of charlatans and tricksters. He thought the tales of the Hasidim to be mere folklore, a word which he always pronounced with … loathing'. (Oz 2005, pp. 35–36)

For Oz's father, his wife's Åse-like stories embodied aspects of Jewish identity and Jewish stereotypes that he rejected. Instead, in the figure of the sun-tanned Hebrew-European, he idealized stoicism, hard work, and pragmatism. The fear of folklore as something sentimental and weak is also noticeable in Goldberg's introduction to *Peer Gynt.* Goldberg defends Ibsen and explains that his use of folklore does not stem 'from romantic sentimentality or simmering admiration for the far away … [but from] the inner rage of one who understands the link between the barren and rocky land of an impoverished nation and their fairy tales' (Goldberg 1953, p. 9). Here too, stoicism is contrasted positively with sentimentality.

These objections to folklore and Europe suggest that Oz's decision to cast himself and his mother in the roles of Peer Gynt and Åse was an expression of an identity crisis within his society and family. It should be noted, moreover, that the 'negation of exile' and the concurrent negation of Europe, aspects of Jewish identity, and folklore at large were not mere reflections of Zionist aspirations. It was also a

strategy adopted by many European Jews in Israel as a response to the trauma of the Holocaust. The entire Jewish populations of the Eastern European hometowns of Oz's mother and Leah Goldberg were murdered. As Grossman describes in *See Under*: *Love*, this was something the survivors tried not to speak about.

In an analysis of *A Tale of Love and Darkness* as an immigration narrative, Adia Mendelson-Maoz shows how the novel operates within the tension between the utopian narrative of the Zionist project and the reality of the Jewish immigration experience. Mendelson-Maoz explains that it 'reveals the trauma of immigration, exposing, alienation, death, and the failure of his parents' generation to blend it. It describes the violence inherent in the Zionist project that undermines the hegemonic ideology' (Mendelson-Maoz 2010, p. 78). This subject, she argues, is served well by the style of the book, which presents a non-linear vision of history and a literary vision of autobiography. Ibsen, it appears, has a part to play in Oz's modernist revision of trauma in personal and national history. Ibsen's Norway, or rather the land of Peer Gynt's imagination, becomes a site where the contradictions between loss, trauma, longing, and fear can be reconciled, and the stories of the Ukrainian and Lithuanian forests and meadows of Oz's mother and Leah Goldberg could find a home. Ibsen's self-exploratory study of inauthenticity becomes a way for Oz to anchor his own experience of inherited exile, grief, and frustrated Zionism.

4. Grossman and the Imaginary Ibsen Performance

In Grossman's *The Zigzag Kid*, set in 1970, Ibsen also figures as an emissary from 'Over There'. When Nonny's guardian, Gabi, 'raise[s] her hand high in the style of that famous actress Lola Ciperola playing Nora in *A Doll's House*' (Grossman 1998, p. 88), she partakes in a series of actions that gesture towards the world beyond Israel. These include Nonny's father's purchase of an old Humber, Felix Glick's hijacking a train and escaping in a Bugatti, Gabi's recital of Lorca, and Nonny's ill-fated attempt to become 'the first Israeli matador' (Grossman 1998, p. 124) by attacking his neighbour's cow. These are all expressions of longing for a glamorous world beyond the Israeli reality. Through several plot twists, Nonny's attitude to this reality changes.

In the first pages of the book, Nonny is riding a train, supposedly to visit his boring uncle in Haifa. Then he discovers that he is in for a birthday surprise, which turns into a fabulous adventure, which turns into a kidnapping, which also proves to be an illusion. The infamous criminal Felix Glick and the famous actor Lola Ciperola are in fact Nonny's grandparents; from them, he hears for the first time the story of his mother who died at the age of twenty-six. This is a novel about surmounting the routine of loss and grief and discovering the excitement that lies beyond. The question is what was the Ibsen production at Habimah in which Nonny and Gabi saw Lola Ciperola? To solve this riddle, some zigzagging is required.

A Doll's House was first staged in 1921, which falls outside the time frame of the novel. It was then staged in 1959, but not in Habimah, but the Kameri, its well-established rival, also based in Tel Aviv. In fact, even though several Ibsen productions were mounted in Habimah, *A Doll's House* was not one of them. The Habimah first lady, Hannah Rovina (1888–1980), played Mrs Alving in *Ghosts* in 1947, but never Nora. Besides, in 1970, she would have been too advanced in years to be the prototype for Nonny's youthful grandmother. Hannah Maron (1923–2014) who played Nora in 1959 is a more likely candidate. Of course, this production is also too early to be remembered by the thirteen-year-old Nonny, but Maron also played Hedda Gabler in 1966. She was often called the 'queen' or 'the first lady of the Israeli theatre' whose every absence from the stage was noted, and whose come-backs in *A Doll's House,* after an absence of a year, and in *Hedda Gabler,* after two years, were celebrated in the press (Bar-Kadma 1966). Several details, such as her reputed fiery temperand her proclivity for grand roles point to her as the possible model. A telling detail is that Hannah Maron's son's name was Amnon, which is also Nonny's full name. Yet, Maron played in Ibsen's productions in the Kameri, not Habimah. The author avoids pointing to a real production or a real actress while zigzagging just

close to the actual events. In fact, *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* are both absorbed by the novel's exploration of theatricality. However, *Hedda Gabler*, though unmentioned, is more important.

The significance of *A Doll's House* for the novel emerges in relation to Toril Moi's point on how the play exposes the characters' interactions with each other as a series of 'self-theatricalizing fantasies' (Moi 2006, p. 234). Moi argues that 'Ibsen's modernism', in *A Doll's House*, is based on the sense that we need theatre … to reveal the games of concealment and theatricalization in which we inevitably engage in everyday life' (Moi 2006, p. 241). The improbable plot of *The Zigzag Kid*, with its pretend kidnappings that turn out to be real, only to be revealed as family outings, articulates precisely that aspect of human relationships. The love stories of Lola and Felix and of Nonny's father and his mother are both highly theatrical. Even more importantly, they become part of an elaborate game that Gabi plays in a bid to win Nonny's father's heart. At the end of the novel, Nonny wonders whether, in fact, the whole elaborate adventure has been orchestrated by Gabi, and whether, in fact, he has been used as an actor in her play. Whatever the case may be, Gabi, even as she embraces the man who has finally proposed to her, does not forget Nonny; returning him to the role of the all-seeing spectator, she reaches for Nonny's hand to pass a secret message of gratitude and relief: 'At last' (Grossman 1998, p. 308). The novel positions itself in the shadowy zone between reality and mimesis. It is theatre that comes dangerously close to reality only to become theatre again. If *A Doll's House* explores theatricality predominantly in the sphere of human relations, *Hedda Gabler* deals precisely with this cross-over from fantasy into tragedy through the figure of its eponymous heroine whose character may be seen as a prototype for Nonny's mother, Zohara.

Zohara is a dreamy and troubled child who grows into a woman closely resembling Hedda. Consider the following statements: 'Your mother was very strong woman [sic] … and very beautiful. She was strong like only very beautiful people are (93); 'Beautiful, wild like a tiger … she was the queen of Tel Aviv' (226); 'She was even … cruel … There are some whose lives were ruined because of her … cruel like a kitten playing with mouse' (227); 'how she galloped on horseback, she would fly' (95). Readers familiar with Ibsen's play should be able to recognize Hedda in Grossman's image which conflates beauty, cruelty, and power. Hedda flouts nineteenth-century conventions; she offends an elderly lady, threatens to burn another woman's hair, destroys a manuscript, and hopes to convince a man to commit suicide because this action would give her 'a sense of freedom to know that a deed of courage is still possible in this world,—a deed of spontaneous beauty' (Edmund and Archer 1911, p. 210). Like Zohara, Hedda is a skilled rider; she is 'General Gabler's daughter', still remembered even after her marriage for 'riding down the road […] In that long black habit—and with feathers in her hat' (Edmund and Archer 1911, p. 24).

Of course, Hedda is also an accomplished shot who fires the pistols that she has inherited from her father to cure the devastating boredom of her marriage. A weapon also shows up in *The Zigzag Kid*. The first in a series of unusual items, which the novel treats like fairy-tale artefacts or theatrical props, is a nineteenth-century woman's pistol held by Felix Glick as he highjacks the train. In an inversion of the situation in *Hedda Gabler*, it is the father who inherits the daughter's pistol. Glick uses it to threaten the driver of the train, tells the shocked Nonny that it is only a toy, and then causes him even more distress by firing the pistol. This business with the pistol encapsulates both the play's and the novel's preoccupation with the border lines between a beautiful gesture and gruesome violence. Their cruelty, 'Amazon tastes for horses and weapons' (Templeton 1997, p. 230), and beauty are not the only aspects that unite Hedda and Zohara. The remark made about Hedda by Elizabeth Robbins (one of the first actors who took on this role in the English speaking world) is applicable equally to Zohara: she has 'a strong need to put some meaning into her life, even at the cost of borrowing it, or stealing the meaning out of someone else's' (Templeton 1997, pp. 231–32).

Moi notes that in *Hedda Gabler*, unlike earlier plays: 'the everyday is no longer potentially redemptive; it [is] … a petty and banal sphere of routinized, conventional, and empty interactions' (Moi 2006, p. 318). *The Zigzag Kid* is full of attempts to transcend the everyday. Nonny is a policeman's son, yet for him, crimes and pranks are expressions of beauty and courage. Like Hedda's reckless

practice shooting and her threats to burn her rival's hair, these actions hover on the threshold of lawfulness. When Nonny comes closer to crime or violence, he panics, partly because he senses that there is a part of him that is forever a 'fugitive' and a 'criminal' (Grossman 1998, p. 243).

Of course, a significant difference between Hedda and Zohara is their environment. Hedda is confined to the life of a nineteenth-century society wife, while Zohara is free to have adventures. Hanna Maron, who studied the role extensively and was inspired by the erotic tension in Munch's paintings (Snunit 1966), noted of the role: 'Before us is a person with potential, who because of her upbringing [and] environment … was prevented from the possibility of communicating with others' (Bar-Kadma 1966). However, environment is not the only factor in Hedda's personality, and in fact, the reverberation of this character in Grossman's book illustrates this. Having transferred Hedda from nineteenth-century Norway to Israel and allowed her more freedom, Grossman has failed to prevent this character-type's tragic end.

Grossman lets Zohara enjoy everything that Hedda is denied. As a teenager in Mandatory Palestine, Zohara runs wild with the boys, ignores politics, and uses coarse language. Unlike Hedda, she does not lose her father. Instead, she sets off with her father on a two-year adventure, indulging in a life of crime. Still, when Zohara returns, just after the foundation of the state, and much like Hedda upon her return from her honeymoon, she is lost. 'I don't want more filthy lucre', she says to her father, 'and I don't want to swindle fools anymore. I just want to have some fun, to feel my heart beat, because life is so boring now that we're home, I could die of boredom here' (Grossman 1998, p. 251). These words parallel Hedda's complaints of being 'mortally bored' (Edmund and Archer 1911, p. 91), words that acquire their full meaning when she shoots herself in the last act. This sense of boredom might be more than just a reaction to her confining environment. 'Ibsen', asserted one Israeli reviewer, 'misses a full life, a life that is so full that it is impossible … Hedda misses this kind of life and sacrifices her life on the altar of this longing' (Feuerstein 1966).

Zohara's boredom, or rather her longing for a life that is impossible, can be contextualized within the history of her country. Notably, her picaresque journey takes place precisely during the years that saw the outbreak of the Civil War in Mandatory Palestine followed by the expiration of the British mandate, the establishment of the State of Israel, the first Arab-Israeli war, the defeat of the Arab side, and the Nakba, which is the violent expulsion of over hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes. None of these events make it into the novel. It is as if they happen off stage, influencing the main action without being acknowledged or seen. The violence, horror, and triumphalism of these years are hidden by the imagined story of a criminal and his daughter. Oz's novel can supplement some of the blanks in the story of Zohara's return to her country. He describes the years of austerity as the early 1950s came to be known:

> Now that the years of euphoria were over, we were suddenly living in the 'morning after': grey, gloomy, damp, mean and petty. These were the years of blunt Okava razor blades, tasteless Ivory toothpaste, smelly Knesset cigarettes, … cod-liver oil, ration books … government work schemes, queues in the grocer's, larders built into kitchen walls, cheap sardines … Arab infiltrators from the other side of the armistice line, the theatre companies, … washing children's hair to get rid of the lice. (Oz 2005, p. 154)

To combat her boredom, Zohara decides on an act of daring: she climbs the roof of a diamond centre, performs a tune on her recorder for the policemen below and attempts an escape by walking across the arm of a crane to a nearby chocolate factory. The actions are as seemingly gratuitous as Hedda's burning of Løvborg's manuscript or her half-succesful attempt to turn the unfortunate author, who was once her would-be lover, to suicide. Zohara is pursued by Kobi, Nonny's future father, and she shoots him. Her motives, as interpreted by other characters in the novel, are reminiscent of Maron's explanation of the backstory in which Hedda threatens to shoot Løvborg: 'When he wanted to deepen their connection she was disgusted and threatened to kill him' (Bar-Kadma 1966). In Zohara's case, we hear that 'Maybe she felt that he was dangerous … Not as a detective, but as a man. Maybe she could sense that he would play an important part in her life, and it threw her into a panic' (Grossman 1998,

p. 257). Zohara's act, therefore, does not only echo Ibsen's play, it echoes the Israeli actor's interpretation of the play in 1966. With the story of Zohara's escapade, Grossman again lets his heroine have what Hedda is denied: she does not merely threaten to shoot her would-be lover, she actually shoots him, and after her release from prison, the two get married and set off for a remote farm near the Jordanian border. She gives birth to Nonny (whereas Hedda ends her pregnancy and her life in the final act) and she is happy for a short while; yet, all this proves to be a short reprieve from her problems.

Zohara's marriage to Kobi begins to fall apart because he is too fond of the radio broadcasts of football matches, a Friday newspaper, and an after-dinner bottle of malt-beer. Threatened by Kobi's encroaching domesticity, Zohara starts a serious fight when he buys a chintzy easy chair which reminds her of a similar piece of furniture owned by her former vulgar neighbour. In other words, Hedda, re-imagined in a different environment and in a love marriage, still suffers from an intolerance of vulgarity and the banality of everyday. The women's tragic deaths are not merely reflective of their similar personalities. Their suicides condemn their environments. Israel of the 1950s cannot contain Hedda any more than nineteenth-century Norway could. Indeed, reviews of the 1966 production show the critics' conservatism.

Israeli critics wished to improve Hedda instead of understanding her. The *Jerusalem Post* described Hedda as a 'self-centred destructive woman incapable of love' (Anonymous 1966). The left-wing *Haaretz*, articulated her problem as being unable 'to listen to [her] heart' (Gomzo 1966); an article in the right-wing *Hayom* claimed the play's message to be about people's need 'to learn how to match themselves to reality', while the pro-Soviet *Kol-ha-Am* condemned Hedda for being too emancipated and suggested that she should have been more like Thea. These reactions are not atypical; as Joan Templeton demonstrates, critics often deny Hedda her reality and the playwright his right for a subject by suggesting that Hedda is unrealistic or that her salvation lies in loving one or other of the male characters in the play 'simply because they are there' (Templeton 1997, p. 208). What such reactions show is an inability to transcend the very patriarchal structures against which Hedda rebels. Zohara's death, like Hedda's, transcends existing social structures.

The period shortly before Zohara's death is a difficult one. She keeps fighting with Kobi and often runs away to hide in the mountains or drink in Tel Aviv, only to have him collect her and bring her home. Her disappearance is believed by her parents to be either suicide or an accident: 'maybe she fell to her death from a cliff. Maybe she was murdered by infiltrators. The army made inquiries' (Grossman 1998, p. 284). The mystery of her death parallels Judge Brack's shout upon discovering that Hedda has killed herself: 'people don't do such things' (Edmund and Archer 1911, p. 224). Zohara is transgressive in that she ignores the facts of Israeli life in the 1950s, its contested borders, hostility with Jordan, 'infiltrators' or the Palestinian *fedayeen*, as they were known, and the political events that led to their actions. In Grossman's novel, the landscape where Zohara meets her death is not described in realistic detail. It is ostensibly a novel for children, and the story-within-a-story featuring Zohara is told by the bereaved parents to her young son. Underneath the fairy tale romanticism of this story, however, is the reality, such as described by Oz in the account of his nights in a kibbutz:

> Beyond the barbed-wire fence lurked empty fields, deserted orchards, hills without a living soul, plantations abandoned to the night wind, ruins of Arab villages . . . the night . . . was still totally empty. And in this great emptiness infiltrators, fedayeen, crept though the heart of the night. And in this great emptiness . . . drooling jackals roamed, whose lunatic, blood-curdling howls penetrated our sleep and froze our blood towards dawn. (Oz 2005, p. 497)

Grossman's novel, in a way oddly like the autobiographical work by Oz, centres on the son's impossible quest for the dead parent. The fictional Zohara cannot be brought back from the dead, and neither can Oz's mother Fania Klausner. *A Tale of Love and Darkness,* in reviving her Åse-like stories, reconstructing her life in the town of Rovno, and carefully recounting her final moments, confronts the impossibility of reversing or even fully understanding the death of a loved one, no matter how inspired the writing or meticulous the research. Grossman, similarly, sends his protagonist on a quest

to uncover his mother's past. However, neither Zohara's nor Fania Klausner's suicide can be fully comprehended and brought out of the darkness that it engendered in the life of the narrators.

The only thing that can be done is the process symbolized in *The Zigzag Kid* by Nonny's wearing his mother's childhood clothes as a disguise. Through wearing her clothes and walking the path Zohara walked as a young girl, Nonny merges his mind with his late mother's until, in the endgame of the novel, he is able to guess the code of the safe where she has left him a present. Through this embodiment of Zohara, Nonny approximates what the novel admits as impossible—a true knowledge of the Other. The process is reminiscent of Grossman's description, in *Writing in the Dark*, of his ability, as an author, to subconsciously imagine the embodied life of his characters up to the point where he feels 'what it means to be another person' (Grossman 2006, p. 36). For Grossman, this ability to understand the Other through creative endeavour is crucially important precisely because he sees himself as writing in a 'disaster zone' (Grossman 2006, p. 47), which threatens to 'turn human beings into faceless one-dimensional creatures lacking volition' (Grossman 2006, p. 51). To understand Zohara and Hedda is to understand why people 'do such things'. In other words, it means confronting the violence of history and the complexity of the theatrical games that people play in order to survive and that often kill them.

5. Conclusion: Ibsen and Israeli Modernism

Having examined the possible meanings of Oz's and Grossman's allusions to Ibsen in the context of Ibsen's reception in Israel, I would like to address the following question: Why does it matter that Oz and Grossman mention Ibsen? After all, these allusions occupy a barely significant space on the pages of their works. Furthermore, what are the possible applications of the method adopted here for the study of modernism?

Firstly, it is worth mentioning that the present study deals with isolated instances of a larger phenomenon. There were many Ibsen productions in Hebrew, both before and after the foundation of the State of Israel; the catalogue of the Israeli Centre for the Documentation of the Performing Arts lists 47 files containing production materials of Ibsen's plays in Hebrew. In addition, there are reviews in the newspapers, and multiple articles in Hebrew periodicals. There are also multiple translations of the major plays (the National Library of Israel contains three different translations of *Hedda Gabler* and *Peer Gynt*). In other words, if one wished to apply D'Amico's six points to the study of Ibsen's reception to Israel, one would find a rich body of material. The seventh point proposed in this article refers to the allusions and echoes in fiction and drama. While it is difficult to estimate the number of these textual details across the corpus of Israeli literature, it is likely that further research in this direction should yield more results; several prominent Israeli writers, including Max Brod and Ephraim Kishon wrote reviews of Ibsen's plays, and there are some early articles on the connections between Nathan Alterman and Ibsen (Yerushalmi 1976). Moreover, the Hebrew Ibsen should be studied (as has been done by Freddie Rokem) in conjunction the records of the productions of his plays in the Palestinian theatres as well as the corpus of Arabic translations of Ibsen's works.

However, while Ibsen's presence on the Israeli stage was considerable, his plays are not likely to have been the agents of change. The first Hebrew performance in Mandatory Palestine took place in 1905 (Rokem 2011, p. 131), only a year before the playwright's death, and long after the European and even the belated British controversies over *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. Secularisation, feminism, and anti-idealism were central issues in the Israeli society throughout the twentieth century, but it is unlikely that their development was impacted by Ibsen's productions. Rather we are likely to find, as in the case of this article, that Ibsen's plays provided sites for the audiences and critics to engage with these issues as reflected through Ibsen.

What can be gained from the study of Hebrew and Israeli engagements with Ibsen (and indeed other modernist authors in translation), however, is more important than a measure of his impact. To examine Ibsen's reception in Israel means to study modernism from a new perspective, one that transcends temporal and national boundaries.

There have been several calls to redraw the map of our engagement with modernism, not least from Ibsen scholars and scholars of Jewish literatures. Thus, in examining the 'worlding' of Ibsen and his status in his native country, Narve Fulsås and Tore Rem challenge an outdated narrative of Ibsen's becoming modern through his emigration. Their work uncovers an array of networks, both domestic and foreign, that allowed the Norwegian author to become an acclaimed world classic (Fulsås and Rem 2018). Parallel-wise, Jewish literature can be seen as 'transnational and multilingual body of writing whose networks of linguistic and cultural exchange provide a clear counterpoint to the center-periphery model of global literary circulation' (Levy and Schachter 2015, p. 433). In addition, there have been calls to reexamine the temporal boundaries of modernism. Susan Friedman suggests that the traditional view of modernism as a period from 1890 to 1956 (Anselmo 2014) is the result of privileging the developments in Europe and the English-speaking world over a multitude of modernisms that occurred elsewhere. Indeed, if this traditional framework is accepted, then Ibsen is too early and Grossman and Oz are too late to be considered modernists. Instead, Friedman suggests seeing modernism as the 'expressive domain' of modernity, defined as a 'powerful vortex of historical conditions that coalesce to produce sharp ruptures from the past that range widely across various sectors of a given society' (Friedman 2006, p. 433). In this view of modernism, a comparative study of literary works from distant historical periods, revelas not a hierarchical chain of influence, but a conversation between equals.

This conversation, moreover, is two-sided. The later work may illuminate the earlier work's concerns, so that, for example, Grossman's Zohara extends the conversation about Hedda beyond the topic of the repressive aspects of her environment. Conversely, the earlier work may provide a historical counterpoint to the topic explored in the later work. In the case of Ibsen and the Israeli authors discussed here, this refers to Nationalism and Zionism. The ideology that gave birth to the State of Israel, and, by extension, to its literature, is, in the words of Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, a 'modernist creation' (DeKoven Ezrahi 1998, p. 11). Zionism shares features with such cultural revivalist movements as, for instance, the Norwegian cultural revival, a movement which is the inspiration of Ibsen's early historical plays and which enabled Ibsen to receive a stipend to collect folklore. Ibsen's later exploration of myth making, identity, and their relation to national consciousness is relevant to Zionism precisely because of the centrality of myth to the movement. In *Modernism and Zionism*, David Ohana examines Zionism through the lens of what he calls 'mythical modernism', which he sees as the 'fundamental assumption of the ability of the individual to create a world in his own image, and in this way to establish a correlation between (modern) man and his (modern) world not through rational processes, but by means of a new myth' (Ohana 2012, p. 2). This is also one of the key themes of *Peer Gynt*. Looking at Israeli engagements with Ibsen means examining modernism from the opposite ends of the temporal spectrum.

Ibsen's Peer fantasizes about founding a country in the desert peopled by his offspring. When Goldberg has Peer refer to Gyntiana in terms evocative of the Zionist discourse, she draws attention to her position within the recently fulfilled fantasy and the concurrent frustrations of this situation. Her translation expands the reach of the play's exploration of myth making. The same can be said about the performance of the play. *Peer Gynt*, in spite of its critique of colonialism, has not been able to transcend the pull of orientalism (Helland 2009) and neither did the production. Its exotic portrayal of North Africa and the Middle East in Act 4 made no account for the geographical location of the production. Most reviewers did not have an issue with that, although one satirical piece described Peer being dressed as '*ole turki*' [a new immigrant from Turkey] thus hinting at the generic orientalism of the production (Kishon 1952).

A similar bringing together of historical perspectives occurs when Grossman mentions *A Doll's House* at the start of *The Zigzag Kid*. Gabi's raising her hand in the air is described though an allusion to a fictitious performance of *A Doll's House* made by a fictional actress embodying two leading ladies of the Israeli theatre. Grossman does not specify whether this gesture, impressive enough to be remembered by a teenager, is made by Nora at the start of the play or at the moment of her radical rejection of her marriage and her society's ideals. Grossman's Gabi uses the gesture to signal her own rebellion. Not all

children fit into the neat square shapes defined for them by the authorities, she argues, some children are 'zigzags'.[11] The rebellious zigzag and the shocking exit from a doll's house become intertwined.

The shape that gives the book its title is a symbol of deviance as an ethical and epistemological alternative to the established frameworks for examining the past. Nonny has to uncover his past in order to grow up into a responsible adult, but the past is no longer a convenient one-dimensional story, such as the Zionist narrative. Instead it is a zigzagging path across multiple conflicting narratives requiring equal degrees of imagination and integrity to navigate. Oz's autobiographical novel, though a more monumental undertaking, is a similar quest into the past. Like Grossman, Oz offers a multi-vocal, complex narrative, in place of the standard nationalist interpretation of the past. He presents this project as a way to understand his own place within the history of the conflict. For both authors, this quest into the past (undertaken also in their other works) has a redemptive function and is connected to their fight against the occupation and for the Palestinian civil rights. In playing with Ibsen, or rather in casually enlisting Ibsen's help in their exploration of the myths of Israeli nationhood and identity, Grossman and Oz do not merely nod to the past, they expose the intricate paths across physical and time-related borders which literary ideas take as they migrate, grow, and metamorphose.

Funding: This research was funded by NUI Galway College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic Studies Research Support Scheme 2018.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest

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[11] The Hebrew title 'Yesh yeladim zigzag' literally means There are children who are zigzags or, slightly less awkwardly, 'some kids are zigzags'.

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Article

Dream Poems. The Surreal Conditions of Modernism

Louise Mønster

Institut for Kultur og Globale Studier, Aalborg Universitet, 9220 Aalborg Ø, Danmark; louise@cgs.aau.dk

Received: 28 September 2018; Accepted: 6 November 2018; Published: 7 November 2018

Abstract: The article discusses three Swedish dream poems: Artur Lundkvist's "Om natten älskar jag någon … " from *Nattens broar* (1936), Gunnar Ekelöf's "Monolog med dess hustru" from *Strountes* (1955), and Tomas Tranströmer's "Drömseminarium" from *Det vilda torget* (1983). These authors and their poems all relate to European Surrealism. However, they do not only support the fundamental ideas of the Surrealist movement, they also represent reservations about, and corrections to, this movement. The article illuminates different aspects of dream poems and discusses the status of this poetic genre and its relation to Surrealism throughout the twentieth century.

Keywords: Nordic modernism; poetry; surrealism; dream

In modernist poetry, writings are not necessarily something you write, and dreams are not necessarily something you dream. Here, the boundaries are far from fixed. Modernist works often combine different aspects, not just to break with earlier norms and categorizations, but equally to create a freer flow between forms and genres. This also applies to the relationship between poems and dreams. In the modernist tradition, many poems thematize dreams or try to adopt their form. To say about a modernist writer, that he or she writes like a dream, is not always just a normative statement. Rather, it can also be a fact.

As a category, dream poems speak both of the modernist self and of the relationship of the self with the world. Dreams are inextricably linked to the self and illuminate a mental space that contrasts with the physical exterior. In the literature on modernism, dreams are often described as places to which the modernist poet flees when trying to escape from reality. Together with the imagination and the myth, the dream is a privileged place for poetry that forsakes objective reality. Appropriating Hugo Friedrich's concept from *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik* (1956), a derealization takes place; a movement away from recognizable reality. In relation to Baudelaire, Friedrich writes that modernists are aiming at poetry that does not copy but transform. Furthermore, he states that "among Baudelaire's terms for this ability to transform and transpose the real (derealization), two terms return time and again: dream and imagination (rêve, imagination)" (Friedrich [1956] 1968, p. 56).[1]

In contrast to Friedrich, who, in continuation of Baudelaire's homage to the dream that is called "perfect as the crystal" (Friedrich [1956] 1968, p. 57), perceives the dream as a contribution to the positive valuation of the inorganic reality, stands Kurt Leonhard. In his *Moderne Lyrik* (1963), the occurrence of dreams is seen as part of a turn towards the primitive and elementary (Leonhard 1963, p. 49). Here, the dream is not understood as a tribute to the artificial. Rather, it manifests a movement towards a new naturalness. However, if, according to Leonhard, the use of dreams does not relate to 'surpassing' the real, it relates to 'undercutting' it—the pathological and obscene are also mentioned. Despite the immediate differences between Friedrich and Leonhard, in both cases the dream is seen as part of a break with common reality.

[1] Here and in the following, if not otherwise specified, then translations from references written in Swedish and Danish are mine.

However, when thinking about what it means to dream, it seems obvious that it is not just turning away from reality. The dream is not just something unreal; it represents another kind of reality, which, although not of the same tangible nature as the outer world, does not have less authenticity. The dream is a reality that unfolds in an inner space—a world revealed when the outer space is shrouded in darkness. With Astradur Eysteinsson, one can say that "far from rejecting the real world, modernism is seeking reality at a different level of human existence, reality as it is processed by the human consciousness" (Eysteinsson [1990] 1992, p. 184).

The relationship between dream poems and reality is also complicated by the fact that, in addition to creating mental realities, such poems may be recordings of actual dreams. Dream poems are dealing with a deeper reality or an inner substance, and thus the connection between dreams and the subconscious becomes obvious. Freud's description of the dream as the royal road to the subconscious is famous, and the twentieth century is often depicted as the century of depth psychology. It was Freud and Jung's century, in which the platonic model was turned upside down and the individual was no longer to seek truth in a higher, but rather, a lower reality.

This change has had many consequences. As regards literature, psychoanalysis has especially influenced Surrealism, which is the modernist movement that has most strongly adopted the dream. Therefore, the concept of *Surrealism* is important in the discussion of the relationship between dream poems and reality. Significantly, the word Surrealism can be translated into 'super realism', which implies that the connection to reality is not denied; on the contrary, it is emphasized, but at another level. This is a level which, according to Freud, is often thought of as 'under', but is nevertheless said to be 'over' or 'super', and as a result of this metaphor alone, it holds a positive value. Breton's first Surrealist manifesto of 1924 defined the term as follows: "Surrealism is based on the belief in the higher reality of certain forms of associations which, before Surrealism, remained unaffected, in the almighty dream and in the unintelligible play of thought" (Breton [1962] 1972, p. 36). Inspired by Freud's interpretations of dreams, Surrealism explores and gives a voice to the subconscious. In Surrealism, poems and dreams unite as catalysts for what the Surrealists perceive as the authentic reality of the human being. Automatic writing and dream poems become key literary forms of expression in an art that denies a traditional realistic aesthetic, and instead requires that language adopt the mysterious and illogical character of the dream.

Although the intention of Surrealism is to reach the immediate and authentic core of human beings, the issue is not as unproblematic as it may sound. Language necessarily acts as a mediator, which has been repeatedly pointed out. Bernt Olsson's book *Vid språkets gränser* (1995), for example, discusses Breton's confidence in automatic writing:

> It is clear, however, that complete spontaneity can never be achieved. It is prevented by the writing process itself, by the rules of conduct given, and by disturbances from the outside that can hardly be avoided. You must therefore agree with Starobinski when he says that you may believe that Surrealism made a sincere attempt to achieve spontaneity, but that vigilant control and conscious supervision always intervene. Additionally, it is highly doubtful whether language allows the spontaneity. Every attempt to express something in words requires work of consciousness and that what is expressed is transformed through language. (Olsson 1995, p. 116)

Thus, the declared effort of Surrealism is somewhat paradoxical. Its goal cannot be entirely accomplished, and Surrealism therefore appears more like an intention than a fully realized practice. Surrealism itself has a utopian character and can as such be compared to the dream, which is the common denominator of the poems to be discussed in the following, namely Artur Lundkvist's "Om natten älskar jag någon . . . " from *Nattens broar* (Lundkvist 1936), Gunnar Ekelöf's "Monolog med dess hustru" from *Strountes* (Ekelöf 1955), and Tomas Tranströmer's "Drömseminarium" from *Det vilda torget* (Tranströmer 1983). These authors can all be related to European Surrealism and do not only support the fundamental ideas of the movement, but also contain reservations and corrections to this. Furthermore, they propose viewing Surrealism as a literary movement whose validity extends

beyond the historical period in which it was launched; that is, as a mode of expression that stresses the importance of the dream and the subconscious across time boundaries.

1. Dreaming of A Woman

Artur Lundkvist's "Om natten älskar jag någon . . . " is a poem that promotes a surreal dream universe that encircles itself and its dissonant content: The poem begins by depicting a lyrical I who loves someone at night whom he cannot find at daytime. The subsequent 10 parallel-constructed lines identify this figure and finally state: "It is her I love at night but can never find at daytime" [Det är henne jag älskar om natten men aldrig kan finna om dagen] (l. 12). The poem relates to the Surrealist tradition by focusing on dreams and the subconscious, which is also an earmark of the entire work in which it occurs.

Nattens broar marks a breakthrough for the fascination with Surrealism that Lundkvist developed through the 1930s, and along with *Sirensång* (Lundkvist 1937), *Nattens broar* is his most complete Surrealist work. Already the title of the book refers to the Surrealist project and specifically to Breton's *Les vases communicants* (Espmark 1964, p. 223), in which the poet's task is described as forming a bridge between the inner and outer worlds. Lundkvist contributed to introducing Surrealism in Sweden, and in his essay "Surrealismen: det okändas erövring" from *Ikarus' flykt* (1939), he explains Breton's ideas:

> The knowledge of the dream, in which the emotional life manifests itself symbolically, should now serve to overcome this gap so that the correct connection (after being more or less broken over the millennia) occurs again between the two communicating vessels: the dream and reality, the feeling and the thought. (Lundkvist [1939] 1991, p. 104)

Surrealism gives poetry a privileged position and, in contrast to the epistemic of the realistic tradition of prose, it depicts a hidden reality. It is therefore significant that the title of the poem enhances the night. The night is the time of the dream, and as mentioned above, the dream is perceived as a main source of the subconscious life of the soul. Aside from the fact that *Nattens broar* often explicitly tematizes the dream, the language of the work is permeated by the dream's distinctive logic, and is marked by a suggestive mysticism and the visualization of thoughts. In the second part of Lundkvist's book, the key themes are the woman, love and the loss of love, and these aspects are also predominant in "Om natten älskar jag någon . . . ".

At night I love somebody that I can never find at
daytime.
She has fire in her eyes, a storm in her hair.
She has a thin dress dotted with thorn roses
She encloses her own valley with seven hills
She always laughs at a mirror that no one else sees.
She can like a dice show an eye or six
She is a sliding gravel grave with a bouquet of poppies on the top of
the crest.
She is Leda who wades through the marsh, seeking for her swan.
She has a terrace facing the sea where I see her many evenings
in a dress of sea-fire while sunken sails breathes in the depths.
She says: Call me The Night, then you find the root of the good
that at daytime is called the evil.
She wades further out where the ebb tide never ceases.
It is her I love at night but can never find at
daytime.

[Om natten älskar jag någon som jag aldrig kan finna om
dagen.
Hon har en eldsvåda i ögonen, en storm i håret.
Hon har en tunn klänning översållad med törnrosor.
Hon omsluter sin egen dal med sju kullar.
Hon ler alltid mot en spegel som ingen annan ser.
Hon kan likt en tärning visa ett öga eller sex.
Hon är en glidande grusgrop med en bukett vallmor högst på
krönet.
Hon är Leda som vadar genom kärren, sökande sin svan.
Hon har en terrass mot havet där jag ser henne många kvällar
i klänning av mareld medan sjunkna segel andas i djupet.
Hon säger: Kalla mig Natten, då finner du roten till det goda
som om dagen kallas det onda.
Hon vadar allt längre ut där ebben aldrig upphör.
Det är henne jag älskar om natten men aldrig kan finna om
dagen.]

The poem describes the night as a privileged place, offering something that cannot be found at daytime. Without directly mentioning the word dream, the poem plays with the dual meaning of the word: It deals with the lyrical I's dream of a woman, in the sense that it concerns his ideal woman, and in that it describes a nightly room of thoughts in which a woman appears. Thus, the night gives access to a woman of a very special caliber. The poem's ten descriptions revolve around the woman's erotic and mythical appearance, attributing to her a character at once alluring and dangerous. Even though the woman is repeatedly described, however, she does not take on a concrete form. As I will return to later, she is formed of dreams; she is made of thought rather than of flesh and blood.

Nevertheless, she oozes sex. The first description already has unmistakably erotic undertones when referring to her glowing, passionate look and the disorder in her hair, and in the subsequent line, she appears as a veritable Aphrodite: As at the Botticelli painting "The birth of Venus" she is almost naked and shrouded in roses (l. 3). However, the erotic descriptions do not come alone; they also resonate something dangerous. Fire is not only the emblem of passion and love, but also of dead and destruction, and the rose is not only the flower of love. The myth says it was colored by the blood of Aphrodite as she tore herself on her way to her lover Adonis' dead body. In addition to being associated with eroticism and love, fire and roses are linked to death, and as the color red reoccurs with the poppies in the line: "She is a sliding gravel grave with a bouquet of poppies on the top of the crest." [Hon är en glidande grusgrop med en bukett vallmor högst på krönet] (l. 7), the mind is guided not only towards the attractive and unattainable nature of these flowers. The poppy is beautiful and porous on the surface, but inside it contains a potentially dangerous poison. The woman steps forward as a *femme fatale*.

This duality or multifaceted character of the woman is explicitly compared to a dice that can "show an eye or six" [visa ett öga eller sex] (l. 6). This line assigns to her a somewhat monstrous character, thus contributing to the adventurous and mythological descriptions that characterize the poem. These perspectives are also present in the number seven, which is the sum of the dice's eyes. In addition, they appear in the image of the valley with seven hills (l. 4) and relate to the mirror (l. 5), which is said to bring seven years of misfortune if it is broken. Furthermore, they are present in the aforementioned allusion to Aphrodite, in the portrayal of Leda and the Swan (l. 8), and in the description of the woman's position on the terrace (l. 9). Here she alludes to a siren, suggesting that her enchanting appearance has caused the loss of many ships.

Furthermore, these mythological figures all relate to water—and primarily, to its perilous qualities. As the nickname Anadyomene indicates, Aphrodite is not only attached to the shattered sea. The focus is on Leda, just as she "wades through the marsh" [vadar genom kärren] (l. 8), and when the description

of the woman approaches the portrayal of a siren, this is because her terrace faces the sea while "sunken sails breathe in the depths" [sjunkna segel andas i djupet] (l. 9). Finally, the last fixation of the woman is related to the sea as well. It reads: "She wades further out where the ebb tide never ceases" [Hon vadar allt längre ut där ebben aldrig upphör] (l. 11). However, this description has the features of a paradox: If you go further into the water it supposedly becomes deeper, but instead, the woman comes to a place where the ebb tide never ends. How is that? Does this mean that she will keep causing shipwreck? Does it mean that the woman will still pose a danger to those in her presence?

This is possible. In any case, the description reinforces the amazing and unreal aura radiating from the woman; through the eyes of a man she appears at the same time elevated and destructive, captivating and demonized. The complex character of the woman's portrait is also consistent with the fourth and fifth lines that focus on her self-sufficiency and self-esteem, as well as convergent with the embracing gesture of the structure of the poem. Finally, it becomes evident in the last stanza that the woman establishes a universe for herself. For a moment, the woman gets to speak and says: "Call me The Night, then you find the root of the good that at daytime is called the evil" [Kalla mig Natten, då finner du roten till det goda som om dagen kallas det onda] (l. 10). The woman identifies herself with the night. Not only does the woman appear in the night, she is the night. Gaston Bachelard comments on this connection between the night and the woman in *L'eau et les Rêves* (1942). Discussing the combination of water and night, he notes that: "If the night is personified, it is a goddess that nothing can resist, who sweeps everything, who conceals everything; it is the goddess of the veil" (Bachelard [1942] 1991, p. 138).

In the woman's speech, the night contrasts with the day, and she advocates a reversal of common moral hierarchies. She represents a connection to the darkened side of life and is a symbol of hidden human forces, something which is also indicated by the root metaphor of her statement. With reference to Freud, we might say that she incarnates Eros and Thanatos. These concepts sum up her mythological character as well as the references to life and death in the poem, where the woman appears at once as erotically alluring and life-threatening to those who come close to her.

It is, therefore, evident that it is not a concrete woman to which the lyrical I is attracted. It is a distinctive feature of Artur Lundkvist's depictions of women that they rise above the singular level. As Carl-Eric Nordberg put it in *Det skapande ögat. En färd genom Artur Lundkvists författarskap* (1981):

> The woman becomes a myth. She is lifted out of her individual life. She is over-coated with the paralysis of a parable depriving her of identity and personality. As a compensation, she is transformed into a natural power. She incarnates the elements and primitive forces". (Nordberg 1981, p. 136)

The woman condenses essential human forces. Thus, she alludes to the dream that is the prerequisite for her appearance, while also constituting its embodiment. The subconscious is the source of dreams—both in Freud, who sees it as the symbolization of displaced childhood conflicts, and in Jung, who considers it from an archetypal perspective. In a visual and condensed form, the dream shows that which cannot be said directly. Moreover, by constituting a condensed and indirect form of expression, the dream is also closely related to poetic language. Between the woman, the dream, and poetry, there are clear correspondences.

A particularly intimate connection between the dream and Surrealist poetic language lies in the priority of the visual. The paradoxical nature of the poem is situated at the trope level, and from a stylistic point of view, it is especially the colliding images of the poem that connect it with the language of Surrealism.[2] These images allow the very same woman to be described as a valley, a dice, a sliding

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[2] In his introducing article to Surrealism in *Ikarus' flykt* (1939), Lundkvist describes the function of the poetic image in a way that is indicative of his own Surrealist poetry: "The image plays a crucial role in this poetry: its world is identical to the world of imagery in which everything is possible and all opposites can be united. The image assumes an almost mythical meaning for the surrealists" (Lundkvist [1939] 1991, p. 108).

gravel grave, Leda and much more. As Surrealist poetry enters the footsteps of the dream, its intense images become a way to create a bridge between the conscious and the subconscious, between the inner and outer worlds. "Om natten älskar jag någon . . . " is such a bridge.

2. The Grotesqueness of Dreams

Gunnar Ekelöf is also one of the great dreamers of poetry. Already in his 1932 debut collection, the dream plays a crucial role, and in *Dedikation* (1934) and *Sorgen och stjärnan* (1936) it is a very frequent subject. However, the dream does not only occupy a central position in Ekelöf's writings from the 1930s, when Surrealism was in its prime in Europe. Both Ekelöf's own poetry and the literary studies of it make it clear that the dream is emblematic of his entire authorship. Thus, in his monograph *Gunnar Ekelöf* (1997), Anders Olsson states that the dream is "one of Ekelöf's most important ways into creation" (Olsson 1997, p. 56).

Even though the importance of the dream in Ekelöf's poetry is not limited to the historical period of Surrealism, there is a close connection between the two in his case. Artur Lundkvist was not alone in introducing Surrealism in Sweden. Ekelöf was another active figure in this venture and, in addition to articles, he published the book *fransk surrealism* (1933). In this book, he presented the movement and also translated texts from some of its leading figures, including Breton, Éluard, Dali and Tzara. In analogy with the dream representing a continuous motive in his writing, Surrealist traits are found throughout his works. Even at a time when Ekelöf's explicit Surrealist commitment is a long way back in time, we find poems that can be classified as Surrealist. "Monolog med dess hustru" from *Strountes* (1955) belongs in this category.

Monologue with his wife
Take two very old chamberlains and overtake them
on the North Sea
Provide each of them with a comet in the bottom
Seven comets each!
Telegraph:
If the city of Trondheim receives them it will be
bombed
If the tallow field releases them it will be bombed
Now you must signal:
Larger ships arrive
Don't you see there, in the radio! Larger ships
on their way. Signal a warning!
All small strawberry boats you must say shall go
ashore and go to sleep
—Come and help me. I am disappearing.
He is about to transform me, the god in the corner
over there (whispering)

[Monolog med dess hustru
Tag två extra gamla kammarherrar och hinn upp dem
på Nordsjön
Förse dem med var sin komet i änden
Sju kometer var!
Telegrafera:
Om staden Trondheim tar emot dem kommer den att
bombas
Om talgfältet släpper ut dem kommer det att bombas
Nu måste du signalera:

Större fartyg ankommer
Ser du inte, där i radion! Större fartyg
i uppfart. Signalera en varning!
Alla små jordgubbsbåtar ska du säga att de går in till
strand och lägger sig
—Kom och hjälp mig. Jag försvinner.
Han håller på att förvandla mig, guden i hornet
därborta (viskande).]

This poem is both a dream poem and an example of automatic writing, thus embracing the two different ways recommended by the Surrealists, in the attempt to gain access to the subconscious.[3] Originally, it was written down by Ekelöf's wife, and except from two lines that have been deleted in the published edition, it is said to be a word for word reproduction of Ekelöf's dreamlike tale one morning shortly before he woke up (Hellström 1976, p. 254). This information is relevant for understanding the title of the poem. The participation of Ekelöf's wife explains her occurrence in the title. However, the voice in the poem should not be identified with Ekelöf. There is a distance fromthe private subject, which can be seen as an expression of a modernist depersonalization strategy as well as of a way of pointing to the multiple layers of personality and to the Surrealist's perception of the subconscious as something that reveals through dreams and streams of consciousness. In any case, the lyrical I is subject to a greater power. This becomes evident in the last part of the poem: "—Come and help med. I am disappearing./He is about to transform me, the god in the corner/over there (whispering)" [—Kom och hjälp mig. Jag försvinner./Han håller på att förvandla mig, guden i hörnet/därborta (viskande)]. The poem moves forward to the point of awakening, resembling the fading of the pre-conscious speech and the spatial narrowing of the otherwise wide oceanic space of dreams.

If we look at the main part of the poem (ll. 1–11), it seems evident that a mysterious, uncensored and subconscious power has been at play. This articulation of the subconscious and repressed also corresponds with the overall strategy behind *Strountes*. Together with *Opus incertum* (1959) and *En natt i Otocac* (1961), *Strountes* represents a trilogy, which, Ekelöf underlines, is marked by an anti-aesthetic and absurdist endeavor. *Strunt* means rubbish or meaningless speech, and the title is inspired by Carl J. L. Almqvist's uncompleted and unpublished *Strountes. The first book*. But even though *Strountes* highlights the neglected, low and meaningless, it seems almost impossible to transcend the borders of meaning. It is hardly possible to do so, inasmuch as even the most raging and incoherent speech is always in some sense meaningful. However, what one can do is reject unequivocal statements; to bring forth things that at first sight seem meaningless; to highlight things which are otherwise neglected or ignored, or—using a paraphrase for yet another of the concepts that have been widely used in the description of Ekelöf's Strunt-poetry—to create room for the appearance of the poetic in the anti-poetic. "Monolog med dess hustru" may be read as exactly such an opening to that which is otherwise marginalized.

The poem presents a grotesque scenery. What is going on is so conspicuous and radically divergent that the reader feels unable to gather the parts of the poem into a meaningful whole. As already mentioned, however, this immediate sense-rejecting attitude does not imply that the poem is entirely meaningless. Rather, its significance is codified, as it is not obvious where interpretation can begin. Seen in the light of Surrealism's connection to a psychoanalytic discourse, it may seem natural to trace its meaning back to the writer. However, this dreamlike speech appears in a poem collection, and therefore it has been transformed from a private discourse to an aesthetic expression. Moreover,

[3] It might seem strange that as late as in 1955, Ekelöf published a text like this—not least because he had expressed clear reservations about *l'écriture automatique*. However, in the words of Printz–Påhlson, this method can be said to be "a kind of pure aesthetic primitivism" (Printz-Påhlson 1958, p. 121) and it thus fits with Ekelöf's persistent fondness of the spontaneous and random.

despite the fact that no conscious strategy was behind the design of the poem, it must be assumed that Ekelöf found it successful in so far as he included it in his collection.

We do not know what criteria Ekelöf considered, but I think the poem is interesting because it captures the three main elements that Ekelöf ascribes to Surrealism in his introduction to *fransk surrealism*. Thus, not only do I perceive the poem as producing a Surrealist scenario; I think it can be read as a reflection of what Ekelöf regarded as the constitutive features of Surrealism. In the beginning of his book, he emphasizes that Surrealism is a revolutionary movement. He perceives Surrealism as an effort to free the human being from outer social as well as inner moral constraints; as an attempt at a radical change in which humanity and not society comes first and is indicative of the development of the future. Furthermore, Surrealism represents a revolt of the aesthetics. It is a rebellion against what Ekelöf calls the dominance of aesthetics over art; form over content. According to Ekelöf, the essence of the Surrealist program can be summarized in the following paragraphs: "Society should be guided by man, morality should be guided by instincts, art should be guided by the unimpeded impression—and not the other way around" (Ekelöf [1933] 1962, p. 13).

An understanding of "Monolog med dess hustru" can take its starting point in these tree aspects. Despite the fact that in a new preface to the re-release of *fransk surrealism* in 1962, Ekelöf clearly discredited his own former representation of Surrealism, I believe that the poem encourages a similar change, socially as well as morally and aesthetically. Furthermore, Ekelöf's subsequent criticism of Surrealism was primarily aimed at the form in which Surrealism was practiced, whereas its fundamental beliefs remained in accordance with his own view of life.[4] I will address this later, but it is important to mention that in this preface, Ekelöf also seems to pave the way for a distinction between Surrealism as a historical movement and as a modal phenomenon in so far as he begins by placing Surrealism in the past, but concludes by saying that Surrealism has existed at all times (Ekelöf [1933] 1962, p. 9).

"Monolog med dess hustru" is a rebellious poem. To the extent that it can be paraphrased, its main part at first invites the fabrication of a living bomb (ll. 1–3), then proceeds to voice a threat (ll. 4–6), and finally depicts a concrete danger and orders a warning to be given against this (ll. 7–11). In this final part, the distance from the described scene disappears to some extent. The approach is more intimate and addresses a 'you', and the scenery becomes present. Still, the dominant mode of the poem is imperative and, in accordance with the action it encourages, it is socially and morally provocative. Its overall expression represents an artistic revolt.

The socially rebellious perspective of the poem is evident from the description of the two very old chamberlains who are to be used as bomb material (l. 1). A chamberlain holds a social position that speaks of an old hierarchical structure which, in addition to dividing people into masters and servants, also deprives the servants of their rebellion potential by holding them in a similar structure, divided by rank. Furthermore, Trondheim, which was the first seat of the Crown in Norway, is mentioned as one of the places at risk of being bombed. The poem marks a concrete distance to this center of power by mentioning the telegraph, which operates from a distance. The spatial relationship of the poem is essential, and in contrast to the negatively loaded elements, the spatial distance is minimized as regards the positive dimensions of the poem: Here you do not use the telegraph, but signals, and what you signal is no longer a threat, but a warning. Those who are being warned and thus protected are "All small strawberry boats" [Alla små jordgubbsbåtar] (l. 11). The poem takes sides with that which is

[4] In *Ensamheten, döden och drömmarna. Studier över ett motivkomplex i Gunnar Ekelöfs diktning* (1971) Bengt Landgren discusses Ekelöf's complex relationship to European Surrealism. He discusses how Ekelöf is launched as a Surrealist poet, but distances himself from this movement and instead points to his relationship to earlier poetry, including Lautréamont, Rimbaud and Mallarmé (Landgren 1971, p. 95). While Ekelöf expresses a positive attitude towards Surrealism in a number of articles from the beginning of the 1930s, he criticizes the movement in, among other texts, "En återblick" (1940) and *Självsyn* (1947). However, Ekelöf is primarily critical of the method of Surrealism, even while its perception of life remains in agreement with his own.

small, earthy, sweet and red, which are the connotations associated with the strawberry boats, and thus we may also read the poem as an invitation to re-map current power conditions.

In parallel to this social revolt, the poem also plays with common moral norms. Obviously, it is offensive to fabricate living bombing material and to present threats. Furthermore, the request to stuff the chamberlains with comets, as if they were chickens about to be roasted in the oven, is not just a demotion, but also a provocation of taste. In addition, the seven comets represent absurd oversizing, and the number of seven in itself has religious allusions. Therefore, by implication, the religious order is also subject to degradation. If we include the last paragraph of the poem (its last three lines), we see that god is not spelled with a capital G; rather he appears to be one god among others who has been forced into a distanced corner. While seemingly elevating the dream and inspiration, the passage opposes a traditional religious perception of existence and to some extent distorts the classic romantic idea of divine inspiration.

However, the most powerful revival of the poem takes place in relation to art itself. The visual appearance of the poem represents a revolt against classical lyrics. The poem has a very asymmetrical and unrestricted appearance: Its lines are of very uneven lengths and include from one word to lines that exceed the space of the individual line and include the next. This unorderly visual image reflects a rhythmic instability that varies between ultrashort passages and longer cadences. As the poem progresses and the content becomes more chaotic, a further breakdown of form occurs. The occurrence of short sentences becomes more frequent (ll. 7–9), as do the contrasts (see ll. 9–10 and the first line of the second paragraph). The visual and rhythmic appearances of the poem break with a classic aesthetic expression, and there is no rhyming or linguistic melodiousness, no seductive or suggestive elements. On the contrary, the form is hard and direct, as testified by the large number of exclamation marks, colons and italics. The poem practices a short style: a compressed and elliptical message in an antipoetic and unsentimental form. It can itself be regarded as a mode of expression similar to that of telegraphing and signaling. However, as Anders Mortensen mentions in *Tradition och originalitet hos Gunnar Ekelöf* (2000), another genre is also at stake, as the stuffing of the chamberlains alludes the laconic expression of the food recipe (Mortensen 2000, p. 219).

In an essay in *Blandade kort* (1957) about the cookbook writer Cajsa Warg, Ekelöf takes a special interest in this genre. Here he emphasizes that even the food recipe can grow to poetic heights: "much of her cuisine [. . .] has in time become so unlikely, sometimes almost epic and sometimes touching, that it has risen to the dignity of the grotesque. These dishes are no longer food, they are poems!" (Ekelöf 1957, p. 14). In his comment, Ekelöf highlights not only the poetic qualities of the antipoetic, but also the grotesque, which is yet another example of consistency between "Monolog med dess hustru" and Cajsa Warg's recipes.

In continuation of this parallel between the food recipe and the poem, we now return to the discussion about Ekelöf's relationship with European Surrealism and its connection with his view of life. In his article "Från dadaism till surrealism" (1934), Ekelöf describes the ideological foundation of Surrealism as a feature that distinguishes it from many other modern movements, for which, according to Ekelöf, it was formal inspiration rather than ideas that intoxicated (Ekelöf 1934, p. 34). Moreover, just as the Surrealists pleaded in favor of a reversal of norms and of a strengthening of both the spiritual and social proletariat, Ekelöf's poetry speaks for the reconsideration of the values that characterize modern western society. He is in accord with the impulse of Surrealism when underlining the authenticity of pure inspiration, the antiesthetic and that which is normally underestimated. And even though, in his preface to the 1962 publication of *fransk surrealism*, Ekelöf went to great length to distance himself from his youth identification, his rejection is far from unambiguous. The essay "En återblick", reprinted in *Blandade kort* from 1957 and taking stock of Surrealism, is sure enough written from a critical distance, weighing both the pros and cons of the doctrines and results of Surrealism. However, Surrealism is conferred a lasting influence in quite a number of ways: Surrealism is credited for having triggered a powerful launch of 'the revaluation machinery'; for having spotlighted neglected sides

of the human being, and for having broken with the traditional understanding of poetry. The same features apply to Ekelöf.

3. The Mystery of Dreams

As our final example of dream poems within the modernist tradition, we shall look at Tomas Tranströmer's "Drömseminarium" from *Det vilda torget*, a poem which is also clearly linked to Surrealism. In Tranströmer's case, however, it is even more difficult to distinguish between what is the expression of a (late) Surrealist impulse, or rather of general psychological interest. Tranströmer worked as a psychologist, and in this capacity took a scientific interest in the mental life of humans as well as in the significance of dreams.

In Tranströmer's writings, the dream is an extremely important subject. Already in Urban Torhamn's early article, "Tomas Tranströmers poetiska metod" (Torhamn 1961), the importance of the dream and the author's affinity for European Surrealism is underlined. This also applies to Kjell Espmark's book *Resans formler* (1983), which emphasizes Tranströmer's positive assessment of the dream and draws a parallel to Surrealism: "In the assessment of the sparkling reality of the dream and in the sense that this gives 'our life balance', Tranströmer really comes close to Surrealism" (Espmark 1983, p. 56f.). Similar points of view appear in Staffan Bergsten's *Den trösterika gåtan* (1989), and in his *Koncentrationens konst* (1999) Niklas Schiöler stresses once again that the dream is one of the most common motives in Tranströmer's poetry. Schiöler also maintains that what constitutes the primary similarities between Tranströmer and the Surrealist movement is "the attitude to the dream as an anxious and fascinating source of both unexplored experiences and human knowledge" (Schiöler 1999, p. 225). Moreover, Tranströmer shares the use of an overwhelming amount of imagery with Surrealism.

However, Schiöler considers not only the pros but also the cons of Tranströmer's position in a late Surrealist tradition. In his attitude to writing, Tranströmer differs from a classic Surrealist position. Schiöler finds that he is more in line with Lundkvist and Ekelöf's criticism of *ecriture automatique*, and in contrast to Surrealism's approval of an unrestrained writing style, Tranströmer's poems represent a very conscious formative process. His realistic approach, normal punctuation (after 1950), use of traditional verses and a non-revolutionary attitude also point away from Surrealism, according to Schiöler (1999, p. 230). However, while it seems sensible to speak about a moderated version of Surrealism in Tranströmer, it is important to stress his connection with the Surrealist tradition, especially as regards its relation to psychoanalysis. In his understanding of the dream as a guide to the unconscious, and thus, to a reality of another order, he is in keeping with Surrealism.

"Drömseminarium" can be seen as one long development of a dream theme which forms a composite view of the relationship between the outer and inner reality, the visible and the invisible, actualization and oblivion.

Dream Seminar

Four thousand million on earth.
They all sleep, they all dream.
Faces throng, and bodies, in each dream—
the dreamt-of people are more numerous
than us. But take no space…
You doze off at the theatre perhaps,
in mid-play your eyelids sink.
A fleeting double-exposure: the stage
before you out-maneuvered by a dream.
Then no more stage, it's you.
The theatre in the honest depths!
The mystery of the overworked director!

Perpetual memorizing of new plays…
A bedroom. Night.
The darkened sky is flowing through the room.
The book that someone fell asleep from lies
still open
sprawling wounded at the edge of the bed.
The sleeper's eyes are moving,
they're following the text without letters
in another book—
illuminated, old-fashioned, swift.
A dizzying commedia inscribed
within the eyelids' monastery walls.
A unique copy. Here, this very moment.
In the morning, wiped out.
The mystery of the great waste!
Annihilation. As when suspicious men
in uniforms stop the tourist—
open his camera, unwind the film
and let the daylight kill the pictures:
thus dreams are blackened by the light of day.
Annihilated or just invisible?
There is a kind of out-of-sight dreaming
that never stops. Light for other eyes.
A zone where creeping thoughts learn to walk.
Faces and forms regrouped.
We're moving on a street, among people
in blazing sun.
But just as many—maybe more—
we don't see
are also there in dark buildings
high on both sides.
Sometimes one of them comes to the window
and glances down on us. [5]

[Drömseminarium

Fyra miljarder människor på jorden.
Och alla sover, alla drömmer.
I varje dröm trängs ansikten och kroppar—
de drömda människorna är fler än vi.
Men de tar ingen plats…
Det händer att du somnar på teatern.
Mitt under pjäsen sjunker ögonlocken.
En kort stunds dubbelexponering: scenen
där framme överflyglas av en dröm.
Sen finns det ingen scen mer, den är du.
Teatern i det ärliga djupet!

[5] Translated by Robin Fulton in Tomas Tranströmer (2002): *New Collected poems*, pp. 141–42.

Mysteriet med den överansträngde
teaterdirektören!
De ständiga nyinstuderingarna…
Ett sovrum. Det är natt.
Den mörka himlen flyter genom rummet.
Den bok som någon somnade ifrån
är fortfarande uppslagen
och ligger skadskjuten på sängkanten.
Den sovandes ögon rör sig,
de följer den bokstavslösa texten
i en annan bok—
illuminerad, ålderdomlig, snabb.
En hisnande commedia som präntas
innanför ögonlockens klostermurar.
Ett enda exemplar. Det finns just nu!
I morgon är alltsammans utstruket.
Mysteriet med det stora slöseriet!
Utplåningen… Som när turisten hejdas
av misstänksamma män i uniform—
de öppnar kameran, ruller ut hans film
och låter solen döda bilderna:
så mörkläggs drömmarna av dagens ljus.
Utplånat eller bara osynligt?
Det finns ett utom—synhåll—drömmande
som alltid pågår. Ljus för andra ögon.
En zon där krypande tankar lär sig gå.
Ansikten och gestalter omgrupperas.
Vi rör oss på en gata, bland människor
i solgasset.
Men lika många eller fler
som vi inte ser
finns inne i de mörka byggnader
som reser sig på båda sidorna.
Ibland går någon av dem fram till fönstret
och kastar en blick ner på oss.]

The title "Drömseminarium" is informative of the mode of the poem. It tells us that the poem relates to a scientific discourse, and the poem also develops as a third-sided composition whose *exordium* (ll. 1–5), *exemplum* (ll. 6–34) and *peroratio* (ll. 35–46) evoke associations of a scientific statement or lecture. However, if at first glance the poem seems to relate to a scientific discourse, a closer inspection reveals a different picture. Not only are there actually far more fluid boundaries between the parts of the text than indicated by the above classification; a number of elements even undermine a common scientific perspective.

Already at the end of the first part of the poem, a discrepancy becomes clear between that which is scientifically demonstrable and measurable on the one hand, and the more fleeting and metaphysical nature of the dream on the other. This discrepancy reflects that although there are more people in dreams than in reality, they do not occupy space. The significance of the dream cannot be measured using the external standards of the world. Therefore, the examples used in the attempt to capture the essence of the dream also dissociate from a scientific area and relate to art; the theater and the book constitute the starting points of the description of the dream. Art—especially in its modern forms—represents a break with reality; art creates a world of its own, and so do dreams.

In the first example (ll. 6–13), a double exposure is described. While something is happening on a theater stage, for a moment the spectator falls asleep and is carried to another stage. The outer and inner dramas merge, and a new scene takes over: "The theater in the honest depths!" [Teatern i det ärliga djupet!] (l. 11). In the second example (ll. 14–28), the focus is on the difference between an open book in a dark bedroom and the illuminated comedy taking place behind closed eyelids. The latter dichotomy then leads to what we may either call a third example or consider an appendix to the second (ll. 29–34). Again, the dream is compared to a medium of an artistic character, namely the photograph. The example focuses on a situation in which a camera is opened, and the pictures are wiped out by the light. This is compared to what happens to dreams as night changes into day: "så mörkläggs drömmarna av dagens ljus" [so dreams are darkened by the light of the day] (l. 33).

While the example of the theatre related to the evening, and the second example focused on a nightly room, in the third example we move on into the day. The examples thus allude to a traditional time-period of sleep. However, while the first two descriptions end in an almost dethroning summary of the experiences in these remarks: "The mystery of the overworked director!" [Mysteriet med den överansträngde/teaterdirektören!] (ll. 12–13) and "The mystery of great waste!]" [Mysteriet med det stora slöseriet!] (l. 28), the third example remains more open. In the latter no attempt is made at a final averting fictionalization. Instead the question arises: "Annihilated or just invisible?" [Utplånat eller bara osynligt?] (l. 34). The mode of questioning in itself is essentially open, and likewise, the poem proceeds to invite another and more abstract way of reflecting the significance of the dream. The last part of the poem (ll. 35–46) does not address the dream as we recognize it from our own world of experience, i.e., as an activity that occurs for limited periods of time and often during the night. Instead, we move towards layers that transcend normal experience and time.

Having referred to states of dreaming that relate to the rhythms of the human being and the day, the poem moves towards a perception of the dream as an activity that is constantly taking place behind the visible world. It refers to the subconscious in the description of "a kind of out-of-sight dreaming/that newer stops" [ett utom–synshåll–drömmande/som alltid pågår] (ll. 35–36). A particularly interesting metaphor is: "A zone where creeping thoughts learn to walk" [En zon där krypande tankar lär sig gå] (verse 37). In this metaphor, the subconscious is depicted as the playpen of thoughts, and we start to imagine that behind the thoughts of which we are aware, others are slowly growing up before reaching us. However, many indications suggest that the poem does not remain in this parallelization between the dream and the subconscious. Rather, it moves towards even deeper layers. The poem takes the form of a set of Chinese boxes in which every new form of the dream is hiding yet another and more profound version of the nature of dream life.

Staffan Bergsten and Niklas Schiöler agree that the final image of the poem reveals a dimension that transcends both Freud's notions of the unconscious and Jung's psychology of archetypes (Bergsten 1989, p. 139; Schiöler 1999, p. 182). When the final image repeats the initial image of the poem, this therefore has a deeper resonance. The dreamed people are not just those who actually occupy our dreams and those who we therefore see, in some sense. They are also people who, while remaining unseen in the dark, see us (ll. 41–46). What was initially factual information converging with a scientific discourse is ultimately transformed into a metaphysical statement of a rather indeterminate nature. However, trying to explain the components of the image, which is the interpretative method proposed by Espmark, Bergsten and Schiöler, is not the only option. It is also an option to focus on the poem's form.

As the final picture clearly relates to the beginning of the poem, the poem itself resembles the figure of the palimpsest, which it also thematizes in its many double exposures. What happens over the course of the poem is that a world reappears that had otherwise been erased. The people who no longer pass the road in sunlight—which can be understood as an expression of the real and conscious—have therefore not disappeared completely. They have only moved to a more darkened side of existence. The poem represents a holistic perception of life where that which has disappeared is still present on

another level.[6] It seems to suggest that as our dreams illuminate inner worlds that exist in parallel with the external reality, a space for a larger history that exceeds our usual anchoring in time and space also exists. What seems to have disappeared is still going on, even without us to witness it. Thus, in Tomas Tranströmer's surreal universe, the dream is not just a guide to the inner world of man. It also points to the existence of worlds unfolding in parallel with and beyond what is immediately given, and in that way transcends the Surrealist position.

4. Conclusions

This investigation of dream poems within the modernist tradition has focused on central forms types of dream poems from the perspective of Surrealism, which is the modern European movement that has foregrounded the importance of the dream. In Artur Lundkvist's "Om natten älskar jag någon . . . " we meet a woman of dreams in more than one sense. The nightly dream forms a positive counterpart to reality and creates contact with a both fascinating and frightening woman who cannot be reached at daytime. Thus, the poem supports Surrealism's high evaluation of dreams and its belief in the subconscious powers of the human being. The poems by Gunnar Ekelöf and Tomas Tranströmer reflect the Surrealist movement and the dream on a more general level. Ekelöf's "Monolog med dess hustru" not only encompasses the different methods used by the Surrealists when trying to give voice to the subconscious. The poem is emblematic of Surrealism in that it represents a similar revolt of a social, moral and aesthetic character. In "Drömseminarium", however, Tranströmer sheds light on the very nature of the dream and in doing so, he even moves beyond the level of the subconscious mind. In addition to highlighting the land of inner life, Tranströmer's investigation of the dream creates a space for a larger and more fundamental story which takes place without our knowledge.

Furthermore, these three dream poems are representative of the different understandings of the function of the dream initially described in Hugo Friedrich and Kurt Leonhard's writings on modernism. In Lundkvist's poem, we are introduced to a positive vision of the dream corresponding to Friedrich's understanding of the dream as a release from reality. Ekelöf's poem, on the contrary, is more on a par with Leonhard's perception of the dream, as it is oriented towards primitive and fundamental layers in the human being. Finally, we have seen that Tranströmer's poem represents a continuation of the Surrealist tradition while at the same time transcending this tradition.

If we look at the poems in a chronological order, therefore, it seems that Lundkvist and Ekelöf, who have a share in Surrealism as a historical movement, also represent the most regular Surrealist positions. This is indeed the case, although Ekelöf's poem appears in a collection from 1955. Additionally, Tranströmer's poem points to Surrealism as a movement that remains an important source of inspiration throughout the twentieth century. Thus, the fact that the poems originate from collections from the 1930s, 1950s and 1980s, not only implies that dream poems are an important category within Nordic Lyrical Modernism. It also indicates that a movement such as Surrealism is effective far beyond the boundaries of time with which it is usually associated. Surrealism is not just a phenomenon in European literature that belongs to the art of the 1920s and 1930s. Surrealism is also a mode of expression that throws light on the importance of the dream and the subconscious across time boundaries.[7]

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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[6] In *The Sense of Time in the Poetry of Tomas Tranströmer* (1985), Joanna Bankier also addresses this universalist aspect. Bankier writes that in the poems of Tranströmer, the human being is in intimate contact with nature. Referring to Breton, she concludes: "All things in nature are inter–dependent. And the connections continue, far beyond the visible world into the underworld of the spirit and the dead and into our own unconscious. Man branches out into the shady regions of dream and the dead in a vast system of 'vases communicantes'" (Bankier 1985, p. 59).

[7] This article is based on a chapter named "Drømmedigte—Modernismens surreelle tilstande" from my book *Nedbrydningens opbyggelighed. Litterære historier i det 20. århundredes nordiske modernistiske lyrik* (Mønster 2009). In this chapter, I also discuss poems by Gunnar Björling, Ivan Malinowski, and Henrik Nordbrandt.

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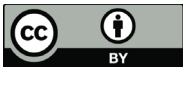

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Article

The Future Modernism of No-Oil Norway: Øyvind Rimbereid's "Solaris Corrected"

Per Thomas Andersen

Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, University of Oslo, 0317 Oslo, Norway; p.t.andersen@iln.uio.no

Received: 5 March 2019; Accepted: 10 April 2019; Published: 17 April 2019

Abstract: The article is a literary analysis of the poem "Solaris Corrected" by the Norwegian poet Øyvind Rimbereid. The work is a poetical science fiction where the oil industry in the North Sea is seen from a retrospective point of view, conveyed in a future language. As a part of the modernist tradition in Scandinavian literature, Rimbereid's work can be read as a significant renewal of the poetic heritage from among others Rolf Jacobsen and Harry Martinson.

Keywords: modernism; science fiction; contemporary poetry; Norwegian literature

One of the most original literary works published in Norway since the year 2000 is Øyvind Rimbereid's *Solaris Corrected* (*Solaris korrigert)* (Rimbereid 2000). This work can be regarded as a renewal of the modernist long poem in the tradition from William Carlos Williams, Charles Olson, Ezra Pound and Michael Ondaatje, among others. At the same time, it is written in intertextual dialogue with Stanislav Lem's *Solaris* (1961) and Andreij Tarkovsky's film adaptation (1972). *Solaris Corrected* is a poetic science fiction about the situation in the Norwegian 'oil-capital' Stavanger in the year 2480—after the oil operations are over, the carbon era has ended and the surface of the earth has become uninhabitable. Thus, the poem can be read as a contribution to literary ecocritical criticism. The most sensational aspect of the work, though, is the poetic language in which it is written. The author has created a new and original language of his own, based on the dialect of his hometown Stavanger, combined with elements from all the national languages from countries involved in the oil industry in the North Sea. Thus, linguistically, the literary project can be regarded as a remarkable renewal in the tradition from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, but Rimbereid's literary text is easier to read.

Rimbereid was born in Stavanger in 1966. Both his hometown and the oil operations have put their marks on his works. Rimbereid debuted in 1993 with the collection of short stories *It Has Begun* (*Det har begynt*) (Rimbereid 1993). In the 1990s he published only prose works. However, in the 2000s he has switched to poetry collections.[1] There is something symphonic, vast, diverse and complex about Rimbereid's poem: The quotidian, concrete and personal are written into a temporality that has extensive historical dimensions, the mood of a here and now is contextualized, and the poem ambitiously draws on scientific and historic knowledge so that the present, the past and the future may illuminate each other. The title of Rimbereid's first poetry collection, *Late Topographies* (*Seine topografiar*) (Rimbereid 2000), can be interpreted literally as late-topographical poetry. He appears to re-map his city, Stavanger, and his region, Rogaland.

Solaris Corrected is Rimbereid's most famous work. He has subsequently followed up the depiction of the local home environment, among other things, in the dialogical long-poem *Jimmen* (Rimbereid 2011). However, he has also further developed his interest in global societal perspectives in, for example, the collection *Herbarium* (Rimbereid 2008). Inspired by, and describing, various flowers, among other

[1] Rimbereid's poetry collections are further discussed in (Andersen 2018).

things, *Herbarium* is a formidable long poem about the tulip and Dutch colonial history. Then came *Sea of the Organ* (*Orgelsjøen*) (Rimbereid 2013), which is built around the organ as a musical instrument and as a central metaphor. *The Laws* (*Lovene*) (Rimbereid 2015) is an extensive poem about the history of law. *Leni's Places* (*Lenis plassar*) (Rimbereid 2017) is Rimbereid's most recent publication, and this work too is a long poem.[2]

The poem "Solaris Corrected", from the collection with the same title, is a poetical science fiction where the oil industry in the North Sea is seen from a retrospective point of view, conveyed in a future language. "Solaris Corrected" was highly esteemed by the reviewers when the work was published in 2004. Paal-Helge Haugen, himself a celebrated poet, wrote, in the newspaper *Fædrelandsvennen* that "books like this are written only once in each generation". Rimbereid was awarded the Critics' Prize (Kritikerprisen) for the book. However, the work also has a significant reception history beyond reviews and prizes. The most spectacular event was the creation of a stage version at The Norwegian Theatre in October 2015 with the famous Norwegian actress Ane Dahl Torp as the main character. In addition, already in 2013, The Norwegian Opera had staged a full-scale opera version based on music by Norwegian composer Øyvind Mæland.

There are several research contributions about "Solaris Corrected". Janneke Kampevold Larsen wrote an article in the Norwegian journal *Vinduet* (2004) in which she discussed the intellectual connection to Stanislav Lem's and Andrej Tarkovsky's *Solaris*. Audun Lindholm gave an outstanding presentation of the work in the journal *Vagant* (Lindholm 2008), and in 2010 Christian Refsum wrote an article in the journal *Edda* in which he discussed multilingualism in "Solaris Corrected" and Jonas Hassen Khemiri's novel *Montecore*. Thorstein Norheim published a presentation of Norwegian contemporary poetry in a book edited by Mads Bunch in 2013, *Millennium. Nye retninger i nordisk litteratur*. Claus K. Madsen has written a genre-focused article in *Edda* (2015) in which he compares "Solaris Corrected" and Claus Høeck's "Ulrike Marie Meinhof".

In this article, the poem will be read as a literary problematization and critical warning regarding the prospects for the oil-producing country Norway. As a part of a renewal of the poetic modernist

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[2] Some scholars believe that the long-poem genre is based on traditions with roots dating back to ancient pic poetry such as Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Examples in modern literature are T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Berthold Brecht's *Die Erinnerung der Hirse*, Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Allen Ginsberg's *Fall of America*. In terms of newer long poem tradition, it seems to me that a Canadian tradition has taken the lead. It started in 1964 when author George Bowering began publishing the magazine *Imago*, which, in fact, considered its task to be to publish only long poems. Over a decade, the journal published 20 different issues. In 1978, the journal *Genre* published a special issue, "The Long Poem in the Twentieth Century". Then, in 1979, award-winning author Michael Ondaatje released an extensive anthology called *The Long Poem Anthology* (Ondaatje 1979). Here Ondaatje wrote that "the most interesting work being done by poets today can be found within the structure of the long poem". In the case of Rimbereid, it is tempting to suggest that this is the situation in Norway today. In 1992 Sharon Thesen published the *New Long Poem Anthology*, and in 2001 (Thesen 2001), a second edition of this anthology came out with contributions from nine new poets. In the field of research, Michael Bernstein's *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic* from 1980 (Bernstein 1980) represents an interesting attempt to describe three of the most famous long poems, Pound's *The Cantos*, William Carlos Williams' *Paterson* and Charles Olson's *The Maximus Poems*, as parts of the epic tradition. Bernstein, as the title says, emphasizes the work as the tribe's narrative. This is a term Pound himself used about his work, referring to Rudyard Kipling. In a monograph from 1983, M. L. Rosenthal and Sally M. Gall defined the genre as a part of the lyric tradition, but they did not use the 'long poem' term. Instead, they introduced the term 'poetic sequence'. Rosenthal and Gall focus primarily on writers belonging to high modernism. The scholars are surprised that the appearance of a whole new genre, they call it "Modern Sequence", could occur almost without notice. At the time when Rosenthal and Gall released their monograph (Rosenthal and Gall 1983), the genre had received so much attention that a conference, "Long-liners Conference on the Canadian Long Poem", was held in Toronto in 1985. The conference proceedings were published in the magazine *Open Letter* No. 2–3, 1985. Thus, even in the field of research Canada seems to be a key contributor on the subject of long poems. Thus, in 1991, Smaro Kamboureli released the monograph *On the Edge of Genre: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem* (Kamboureli 1991). Kamboureli here criticizes Bernstein for simplifying when incorporating modern long poems in the epic tradition. She criticizes Rosenthal and Gall for rejecting the long poem-term and simplifying the complexity of the genre when they see it as part of the lyric tradition. Kamboureli focuses on authors that are mostly younger than those in Rosenthal and Gall's monograph. In her presentation, Kamboureli emphasizes that long poem "is a genre in the present tense". She focuses on the long poem's relationships with place and location, and she writes about the subject-position in the long poem. There is obviously no consensus about the description of modern long poems as a genre. The only reasonable approach is to do as Bernstein does, namely to adopt Wittgenstein's notion of "family resemblance" (*Familienähnlichkeit*) as part of the genre definition. However, there is no room for an elaborate discussion of the long poem genre here.

tradition in Scandinavian literature, the work can clearly be read in continuation of among others Harry Martinson's *Aniara* (1956). Rimbereid's poem is a dystopian depiction of the future Norway where the industrial utopia about the oil country is turned upside down.

Ecological and Linguistic Change

Timothy Mitchell writes in his article "Hydrocarbon Utopia" from *Utopia/Dystopia. Conditions of Historical Possibility* (Mitchell 2010):

> Fossil fuels have played an ambiguous role in our utopian imagination. In the twentieth century they helped to form the most prosperous, healthy, and democratic communities in human history. They enabled these communities to live according to the utopian principle that growth of wealth and well-being could continue without any foreseeable limit. Yet hydrocarbon energy also now appears as a curse. Oil is said to be a cause of violence and war. Societies that process it in abundance appear more liable to suffer from a special degree of tyranny. (p. 117)

Rimbereid's depiction is not about war, violence and tyranny, although he has made room for traditional science fiction elements such as increased monitoring and correction (korrex). However, as mentioned in the introduction to *Utopia/Dystopia,* "Utopias and dystopias are histories of the present" (p. 1), and Rimbereid's works can clearly be read as a warning against the utopian image drawn by oil-producing countries referred to in Mitchell's quote above. As I see it, since the 1990s Norway has obviously been captured by ideas of "growth of wealth and well-being [. . .] without any foreseeable limit". The threat, however, is not war and tyranny as in the present situation in the Middle East, but the global ecological crisis. This crisis is also described by Mitchell:

> These ways of life are unsustainable, and they now face the twin crises that will end them: although calculating reserves of fossil fuels is a political process involving rival calculative techniques, there is substantial evidence that those reserves are running out, and in the process of using them up, we have taken carbon that was previously stored underground and placed it in the atmosphere, where it is causing increases in global temperatures that may lead to catastrophic climate change. (Mitchell 2010, p. 118)

Tony Burns writes in *Political Theory, Science Fiction and Utopian Literature* that in the history of future depictions, H. G. Well's contribution is crucial: "Wells' science fiction is important for the history of utopian/dystopian political thought because, after nearly 500 years of utopianism, it marked a major transition from utopian to dystopian writing" (Burns 2008, p. 19). Both the term utopia and the term dystopia focus on places, *topoi*, and Rimbereid's poetry is clearly topographical. Still, dystopian science fiction narratives are just as much about *events* of the kind Slavoj Zizek describes in his book *Events: A Philosophical Journey through a Concept* (Zizek 2014). There are events with effects that exceed their causes, and that represent basic epochal changes of irreversible nature. The main point in dystopian representations is usually to focus on such events that lie between now and the projected future, events that have taken place in the fiction, but that should rather not happen in history. There are especially two important events that underlie the depiction in "Solaris Corrected", a relatively rapid one and a very slow one. The rapid event is the historical change of region and nation that took place as a consequence of the oil production in the North Sea. It started cautiously in the 1960s, but then gathered speed and changed the Norwegian country in terms of economy and welfare over one generation. In Rimbereid's depiction, this event has been prolonged into the future until the year 2480, and a new fictional event is extrapolated into the text, namely the end of the 'oil adventure'. The affluent society we know from our own time is definitely lost.

The slower event is purely fictional, and is about transformation of the language as a result of the influence from surrounding languages. The changes are depicted from a distance of 476 years. While the first of these events exerts a decisive influence on the theme and choice of motifs in the poem,

the other determines the linguistic expression in the poem. It is a poetic language created for this work alone. The language can symbolize the development that must have taken place in the macro region. Stavanger dialect is the root of the language, but in addition we find important elements from English, German and other languages. The language is characterized by rapid code switching between languages, as well as several abbreviations, omission of some vowels, as well as the elimination of the Scandinavian letters æ, ø and å.[3] Audun Lindholm describes the Solaris language as follows in his article in the magazine *Vagant* from 2008:

> Rimbereid has drawn a linguistic circle around Ekofisk, the first platform city in the middle of the North Sea, and created a hybrid synthesis of Stavanger dialect, Lowland Scottish, English, Dutch and Danish, mixed with Old Norse forms. (Lindholm 2008)

All literary fiction about the future puts the reader to a paradoxical task, namely to 'reconstruct' something that has not yet happened. The time of writing and time of reading constitute one (or two) starting point(s) from which the projection of a moment in the future must be interpreted; that is, it provides us with interpretative tools which are per definition insufficient. The projected point in the future shows discrepancies that are often not explained by historical development. The discrepancies do not progress gradually, as they do in history, but occur abruptly, without preparation. Therefore, they appear to be 'estranged' conditions, phenomena, or situations. The reader must try to 'reconstruct' what has happened between these points in time, despite the fact that they have not yet occurred in reality.

The basic idea is that this 'reconstruction' of possible events should trigger some specific types of reflection in the reader's mind, often with scary or cautionary effects in relation to the reader's present. In traditional science fiction these reflections will often be mixed with a futuristic fascination, usually of a technological nature. In Rimbereid's case, there is little fascination to find, apart from the aesthetic fascination of a linguistic experiment. Thus, Rimbereid's work is clearly of a dystopian nature. In addition, it is with Rimbereid as with most dystopies: the reader must 'reconstruct' *catastrophic* events. The future situation depicted is prognostic; it is based on phenomena of the present, and is likely to come true if it is extended into the future. The author prolongs and reinforces trends at the time of writing. In Rimbereid's case, the prognostic aspect is clear and is supported by research at the time of writing. The prognostic perspective is that oil wells and gas wells will run out and be emptied. There are no more reserves of fossil fuels, a fact which is obviously supposed to change the future society.

The society Rimbereid depicts in "Solaris Corrected" is, however, so drastically different from our well-known world of today that there must be *several* events underlying the changes in addition to the isolated fact that the oil and gas business has ended. The reader will have to 'reconstruct' more unknown events between the present and the future in order to make sense of the narrative. This can be demanding because the text gives few concrete hints. However, perhaps it is first and foremost an overall point that matters if we take Michael D. Gordin's point of view into account: "Utopias and dystopias are histories of the present" (Gordin et al. 2010, p. 1). The reflections that Rimbereid's poem primarily produces resemble the key point made in Timothy Mitchell's article on "Hydrocarbon Utopia": There is a connection between petroleum and politics, between energy and society. Taking into account the societal changes caused by previous energy changes, it may not be unreasonable to think that something similar can happen when the era of fossil fuels is over. History teaches us that there is no guarantee that we can go on living as we are used to, just replacing our energy sources.

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[3] Since English words are integral parts of Rimbereid's language, and since this language also includes German words and Rimbereid's own word constructions, I have chosen not to give English translations of the following excerpts from "Solaris Corrected". I will, however, render English translations of most of the poem's key words that I discuss.

Energy and Society: From Sun to Coal and Oil

Until the nineteenth century, energy sources were renewable. Sun and rain made plants and trees grow and provided food for humans and animals. "Solar energy was converted into grain and other crops to provide fuel for humans, into grasslands to raise animals for labor and further human fuel, into woodlands to provide firewood, and into wind and water power to drive transportation and machinery", writes Timothy Mitchell, referring to Rolf Peter Sieferle (Mitchell 2010, p. 119). Until the late 1950s, farms were driven on the basis of this kind of renewable energy on the small islands in Ryfylke outside Stavanger by which the Condeep platforms were towed a few years later. Mitchell also writes that "for most of the world, the capture of solar radiation in replenishable forms continued to be the main source of energy until perhaps the mid-twentieth century" (Mitchell 2010, p. 119). In other parts of Europe, however, a shift began gradually to take place from the beginning of the nineteenth century. We are talking about one of the most important events in the history of the globe:

> From around 1800, these renewable sources were steadily replaced with highly-consented stores of buried solar energy, the deposits of carbon laid down 150 to 350 million years ago, when the decay of peat-bogs and marine organisms in particular oxygen-deficient environments converted biomass into relatively rare but extraordinarily potent deposits of coal and oil. (Mitchell 2010, p. 119)

The transition from renewable sources to coal and oil changed the world in almost every imaginable way, bringing about a utopian energy-consuming century. The scientific predictions show that we will empty these extremely potent energy sources in the period 1950 to 2050, more or less consistent with Øyvind Rimbereid's (and my own) life. We are the carbon utopians.

The differences between the traditional societies' solar energy and the modern carbon-based energy communities are great both in terms of consumption and distribution. Mitchell writes about the consumption:

> A single liter of gasoline used today needed about twenty-five metric tons of ancient marine life as precursor material, and organic matter of equivalent of the earth's entire production of plant and animal life for four hundred years was required to produce the fossile fuels we burn in a single year. (Mitchell 2010, p. 119)

Virtually as important as consumption is distribution. The sun wandered by itself over the sky and delivered its energy with relatively well-functioning distribution over most of the globe. Transport of energy was no problem. Traditional solar energy privileged smaller and scattered populations where people could live close to forests, fields and pastures. The sun wandered the same route over the sky every day and every year, and did not accelerate any change.

Coal was a much more powerful source of energy. However, it existed only in concentrated quantities in a few places, especially in the UK, Germany and the United States. Coal also made it possible to develop completely new means of transportation such as trains and steamers. A network of transportation routes for energy and new hubs for infrastructure was developed, all under the control of the coal-producing superpowers. The complex societal process associated with industrialization and colonialism is closely linked to the use of coal as an energy source. One could add urbanization, class struggle and new political organizations, even democratic processes and structures.

Political strikes and strong unions were gradually perceived as a significant problem by factory owners and growth-driven nations. Mitchell believes this was an important reason for the carbon era shifting from coal to oil:

> After World War II, the coal miners of Europe again appeared as the core of a militant threat to corporatist democratic politics. As U.S. planners worked to engineer the postwar political order in Europe, they came up with a new mechanism to defeat the coal miners: to convert Europe's energy system from one based on coal to one based predominantly on oil. Western

> Europe had no oil fields, so the additional oil would come from the Middle East. (Mitchell 2010, pp. 122–23)

Because the Middle East was a much less democratized area than the coal-producing countries, it was far easier to discipline the labor force in these areas. According to Mitchell, after World War II a great deal of international policy has revolved around the United States' need for access to, and control of, oil resources. The new oil industry eliminated the power of European coal workers. Over time it turned out that petroleum is more closely related to tyranny and war than previous sources of energy. Dictatorships in the Middle East have produced energy that large consumers in the democratized world have greatly appreciated. An obvious example is the alliance between the United States and Saudi Arabia. The willingness to wage war for access to oil was manifested with great clarity in the United States' and the Allies' Second Iraq War. It is convenient for the Western world that the brutal link between petroleum and tyranny is obscured: the problems arise in remote parts of the world. Oil-based energy changed the world as much as the transition to coal had done. Although coal was transported to places far from the deposits, the cost of shipping was relatively modest. Very little coal was transported across the big oceans. Oil is lighter than coal, and is therefore much easier to transport. The same goes for gas. The freight takes place partly in giant tankers that can cross all continents and partly in a large pipeline network. Oil and gas fit hand in glove with a globalized era, and has clearly contributed to producing it. For a long time, it was considered an advantage for the major energy consumers that the extraction mainly took place in remote areas, and was carried "home" as needed. However, as the political turmoil in the largest oil producing regions has increased, the problems and costs of maintaining adequate control have become extensive. This has led to countries such as the United States investing more extensively in oil production at home.

However, from the outset of the oil era the USA has been the most important driving force. Across the globe, US oil companies have played a decisive role in establishing oil industry. Norway is no exception. In addition, the great need for energy is due to the new lifestyle for the large and growing middle class that evolved in the United States especially from the 1940s and 1950s onwards. The idea that large populations in privileged nations should have unlimited access to energy in order to provide a non-sustainable lifestyle has spread across large parts of the world, first to Europe, then to Asia. This lifestyle is still in a proliferation phase globally, despite the knowledge that it is not sustainable. Given the extreme energy consumption of the late modern consumer communities and the strong dependency on petroleum as an energy source, it is hardly an exaggeration to assume that the transition to a time without oil will be dramatic. History shows that the link between energy source and social conditions is tight. If it is correct, as many forecasts show that we need to prepare for the oil to end by 2050, life and society are likely to become very different from the petroleum era. Yet consciousness of such a change seems to be insufficient—at least in oil producing Norway. The scope seems to limit itself to preparing to find other sources of income. If the oil wells really run dry globally, the conversions will probably be more basic than that. Perhaps the kind of scenario we encounter in Rimbereid's *Solaris Corrected* is more 'realistic' than the illusion that when the oil ends, we can make a living out of fish and entertainment instead, and otherwise continue as before.

Future Labor and Social Structure

History has shown that energy types are closely linked to technology, working life and transport. Energy sources also have consequences for demographics, organizational forms and class division of populations. There is a close connection between energy consumption and political conditions. Almost all of these conditions are presented as affected in Rimbereid's future vision. The overall change he depicts in "Solaris Corrected" is the transition from a utopian imagination to a dystopian future. The carbon era evolved into the dream vision that there was energy enough to produce eternal prosperity growth leading all the way into heaven. Rimbereid's dystopian answer is a post-catastrophic condition where people plan to emigrate from the surface of the earth because life is threatened. The destination for the migration in "Solaris Corrected" is not another planet, but an underwater society:

AIG ne veit wat aig mein um mrs. Chan ennimeir.
HU haf naw vid 14.6 siner intern lovar
Bestimmen at nearli heila 14.6 ska til
Seifa botten flytta.
DEN ska "SOLARIS" kallast.
"SOLARIS"? Ne meir 14.6? (p. 35)

The new technology associated with the future community is already mentioned in the initial italicized text, in which the narrator addresses a *you*, which, of course, includes, directly or indirectly, the reader. It is apparent that humans use tools that are in one way or another interpolated in the body. It seems that people's strength and ability to work has weakened:

wi arbeiden
onli vid oren nanofingren,
(. . .) AIG seer an
meiner fingren, part af organic 14.6,
men veike, dei er som seagrass (p. 9)

The weakening can possibly explain the extensive use of robots that we hear about several times. Technology in the future community is a mix of new and old. Nano-fingers (Nanofingre) and robots represent the new; but most sensational among the new tools is the Brain-machine (Breynmachin) BK2884, which is placed ten kilometers below sea level, in an empty oil well. The machine has important features:

BK2884 er den best master
til ou biobalansera biosfæren,
og den best master af oren
ekonomical vorld, af taxes, trafficky, siddyplans
og best master af oren plans for future.
OREN organic-og siddy-
konnection kan ne lefa vidout denna breyn, dei seis.
STOPS BK2884 =
BIG risk for oren praktical vorld. (p. 30)

The narrator is confronted with the fact that he will soon have to move down to the bottom of the sea to prepare a "NEW-DEPT-SEA-WORLD" under mud, sea grass and fish. The perspective is urgent:

EIN slik seifa
vorld er kan henda
oren sista chans, dei seis.
OM wi skat enka intelligenten
og seifa uss self, som human existensen,
wi haf ou profa wat we profa kan. (p. 31)

Rimbereid emphasizes, however, that elements from old technology continue to exist. The narrator has "grease" on his hands, yellow black, glossy grease, and explains that these are elements of the past: "DEI is not a part of modern model/novice. DEI is also a part of old sea/of old pipes and old grease" (p. 25).

This leads us to the working life in the future community. The narrator is the supervisor for a team consisting of 123 robots. They work underwater to repair pipes and pipelines. The supervisor is himself representative of the reduced level of labour performed by human people. It is mentioned that they have a working day of only half an hour: "wi arbeiden/so litl, 30 min a day" (p. 9). The robots, however, work diligently. They are like ants, we are told (p. 25). They are called "grabbers" ("greipmaskinar"), they are rectangular, and their size is given in millimeters: $1200 \times 400 \times 350$ mm. They are connected to

each other in a network so that the work they perform is totally coordinated. They have a "collective brain" ("collitive breyn") (p. 10). If one of them breaks, it will be replaced immediately by a new one (p. 25). Yet they do not know about each other. They have a closed feedback system that allows them "to know only of themselves" ("DEI only knows about itself") (p. 10). The narrator says he loves his robots, and he claims they are both free and happy—just that they are not able to be conscious of this fact themselves. They resemble slave workers as we know them from past historical epochs. They have no other function than to work for the benefit of the humans.

It is not entirely clear what the work under the sea is really about. The robots repair "hydropipes". The supervisor's expertise consists of "mechanical knowledge" and he will, as said, contribute to build a safe world under water. In this context, it appears that he is going to pump "geotherminal energy" up from the sea ground. In interviews, Rimbereid has said that the work of "Solaris Corrected" consists in extracting heat energy from the continental shelf under the sea ground. Anyway, it is evident that the worklife of humans has changed significantly in the future community. Rimbereid uses a very concrete strategy to bring about the impression of change. He completely changes measures and numbers: As I have mentioned, the working day is 30 minutes long. He uses the same strategy when describing the new conditions in the transportation sector. We learn about very fast travel both to the region of London and the region of Moscow. The speed is high:

> Ou fara avgarde
> til regio London, i hoy hoy speed-
> tunnel undr seaen
> ovfr platfurmvrak
> og olda, emti gassbrunnar
> der unkring dark seagrass vexr (p. 28)

Speed and mode of transportation are also given in exact terms, and again the measures and numbers ensure the effect of 'estrangement':

> OG plutsl kenna speed,
> kenna startryck gennom
> rygg og neck. MEN so, ven to minutter fara i 1490 km/h
> i el-magnet-tunnel, all er som normal . . .
> SPEEDLOVEN: OU fara av garde
> i eigen gravitation-room, fara forbi vrak og brunnar
> og ne kraft kenna fra det,
> onli kraft fra point long long der fram (p. 29)

Settlement patterns and organizational forms of living have also greatly changed in Rimbereid's future vision. We hear nothing about nations except in conjunction with names of regions such as the "region of Norwg-West". As a community-organizing unit, the nation is gone. As mentioned, the Solaris language is built on the local Stavanger dialect, not on Norwegian official written language, and the influence that has brought about the language changes comes from the regions around the North Sea. We hear from the quotation above that known cities like London and Moscow are referred to as regions ("London region"). It seems that the region is an organizational structure that has gained importance. On the other hand, it is a rather decayed image we are confronted with in the depiction of "city Stavgrsand" ("siddy Stavgrsand").[4] The new and more important organizational forms are obviously smaller than the traditional cities. They are referred to as cells and organics:

[4] The name of the city, "Stavgrsand", is a compound word, combining two neighboring cities existing today: Stavanger and Sandnes.

SIDDY Stavgersand, siddy min,
exist nearli ne at all, mang
konklud naw. KAN henda den exist
onli som ein olda namn,
som symbol an ein siddy?
JA, som om places i 2480 forts sku wiktig vera!
STAVGERSAND, ein nearli
emti place
midt i flowen af so mang
cells, organics, konnekts, pow og del-
lovar. (p. 12)

As for the city, the picture is somewhat confusing. On the one hand, it is depicted as "nearly empty" ("nearli emti"). On the other hand, we learn about "the chaotic streets of the city, packed with people" ("siddyens kaotic streets, proppa af humans") (p. 13). However, the most important organizational group of the society appear to be "organics". The narrator lives in organic 14.6. It has 63,000 inhabitants. Here he lives with his girlfriend Shiri. They have a "little room, owned by organic 14.6" ("litl room, eigat af organic 14.6."). There are many other organics as well, and they appear to be differentiated based on class. Organic 1.1 seems to be inhabited by a perfume-scanting elite (p. 27).

This takes us to the composition of the population. It is clearly classed. At the top of the system, we have neither a king nor a president, but (probably) a Chinese owner, Mrs. Chan. Even in the depiction of this character Rimbereid uses measure and number displacement to create a sense of estrangement; Mrs. Chan is 123 years old. However, the narrator is not sure Mrs. Chan is a person at all.

OG mrs. Chan er good organic-eigar.
MRS. Chan er 123 age, dei seis.
OG difor smart, vid big human novledg.
SELF om aig iblant tenk hu ne exist.
AIG tenk hun mang er, er ein sort firm.
OR kan henda hu ne human er,
men onli ein konstruct breyn
som ein human tenk? (p. 37)

At the upper level of the class society we find those who are called "shadows" ("skuggar"). They live in organic 3.4 and similar organics. They are called shadows because they are behind "all construction, production/all numbers, names/and ideas" ("all konstruction, production/all nummer, namn/og ideo") (p. 23). They live isolated, by themselves, socializing only with each other and "thinking only their own thoughts" ("tenkande onli i deirs eigne tank") (p. 24). It is obvious that they constitute an elite: "They are the knowledge elite of society with stronger power than all the territory owners and those with material ownership" ("DEI er novledg-/humans, vid staerkar pow enn all areal-/og materie-eigare. DEIRS pow/er unbegrensat, dei seis.") (p. 24). The future community has thus preserved the opposition between brain workers and those who have" grease "on their hands. However, the opposition comes very mildly: "THANK YOU!" (p. 24). The active class struggle with strikes as weapons, as we know it not least from the coal era, is obviously history.

The narrator belongs to a class that is simply called humans. Probably he and his class should be regarded as the middle class of the Solaris society. If so, it becomes clear that the middle class has experienced a considerable declassing process since the time of the oil era. As mentioned, the narrator lives with his girlfriend in a small apartment that belongs to the organic where they live. They do not have access to any kind of prosperity or luxury. We do not get an in-depth description of how the narrator or his class lives. However, we learn about a functioning health system. The narrator visits a clinic to get syringes. He suffers from an intestinal infection. At one point his brain is scanned,

and it is determined that he is suffering from a defect: "Conclusion: I have a small defect in my left pantomimic cortic, a somewhat too excessive production of own images" ("KONKLUTION: AIG haf ein litl/defect i venstr phantomic breyn-/bark, ein noko for staerk production/af eigne picts") (p. 41). Thus, the "human" we become acquainted with as readers must be perceived as a kind of dissident with maybe too many independent ideas. That is probably why he tells us the story of "Solaris Corrected".

In addition to providing the health information, some attempts are made to humanize the narrator and his life. We have already heard that he has a girlfriend, Shirin. He also tells us that he sometimes gets hurt by her "bad bad word" (p. 21). He remembers that his father carried him on his shoulders, and he visits his mother's grave. However, we do not learn about any children, despite him being 38 years old.

Further down the ranks of the community we find those who are called drifters. They appear as a kind of nomads, without permanent employment and residence. It is the drifters that crowd the streets of the city, making it chaotic. They are exposed to the most active monitoring and schooling or "correction" ("correctx") as well. There seems to be almost no contact between the narrator's class and the drifters. The narrator says he hardly knows any drifters. However, he has heard of individual drifters who had romantic dreams and tried to move into the wilderness to live in harmony with nature. These romantic individuals have a brutal side as well. We learn that such a romantic drifter once lured people into the wilderness to kill them there.

At the bottom level of the class community we must assume that the robots are located. They perform work for humans and have high capacity. They are under complete control and are designed so that they perform coordinated work without knowing each other. The narrator believes they are both free and happy. However, of course, we do not hear anything from the robots themselves. It is unclear how robots who lack human prerequisites can be happy and free. Perhaps these qualities should be understood as a projection from the narrator and his class of humans.

A striking feature of the depiction of the future society is that no one eats. We are not told anything about nutrition, food chains or how people and animals get food. We learn that animals exist but that for example, elephants can no longer live a free life. How edible nutrition is cultivated is unclear. Brian Stableford writes in the article "Science Fiction and Ecology" that in ecological science fiction "the central thread of ecological analysis is the food chain, which extends from 'primary producers' which fix solar energy into various extended paths whose links are herbivores, predators, parasites, and saprophytes" (Stableford 2005, p. 127). From a strict genre perspective, one might think that this is an argument for not considering "Solaris Corrected" ecological science fiction. Nevertheless, I still think that the focus on energy is just as relevant an ecological subject as the food chain—which is of course linked to the energy issue.

Rimbereid has touched on several aspects of the future community, showing that there is not only one crucial event between the present and the future: the fact that the oil wells have become empty has led to several fundamental and irreversible results at several levels of society. The important point is that the relations between sources of energy and social structures are tight and that the consequences of the historical event in "Solaris Corrected" are comprehensive.

Universalizing Metaphors

As a science fiction story, "Solaris Corrected" shows several significant features that belong to the traditional genre, including the 'estrangement' of the future perspective, a disturbing or frightening apocalyptic or dystopian development of society and living conditions, and technological innovations or changes. Among the technological changes we find not only robots and machines, as I have already mentioned, but also the rhetorical use of measures and numbers that signal science, precision—and change.

> Var for to dagr sidan til sista seifa-
> check i sentrl 14.6. I lopet av 400 sporsmaal,
> 1123 picts og nearli 13,000 electric ljus-impuls

dei scannat min breyn,
all parts af min breyn,
og spesi nucleus caudatus,
ver redsl og sorg kommen fra
og den hypothalmisk INAH 3
ver oren sex existen.
KONCLUTION: AIG haf ein litl
defect i venstr phantomic breyn-
bark, ein noko for staerk production
af eigne picts. (p. 41)

Although the terms here are actually genuine terms for parts of the brain, the numbers make little sense apart from rhetorically signaling scientific and factual accuracy. In "Solaris Corrected" such signals are more important than traditional lyrical elements such as literary tropes. Nevertheless, through the health check, we learn that the narrator has a deviation in the brain structure that results in an over-developed imagination. This corresponds to, and perhaps also explains why, the supervisor in an underwater industrial business writes poems. However, if we look specifically at the "own picts" he produces, we find that the text is only to a small extent affected by tropes. There are some local metaphors like "the bowels of the law" (p. 15), fingers referred to as sea grass and the robots as ants. A small section about a shoal of fish (pp. 31–32) is probably primarily meant to be read literally, but it has a metaphorical potential if related to the "collective brain" ("Kollective Breyn") (p. 10) mentioned elsewhere in the poem. In addition, we have already learned that some of the social classes have been described in terms that imply metaphorical meaning (shadows and drifters).

Except for these rather local metaphors, there are mainly two groups of metaphorical motifs in the poem. One is related to light and light reflection; the other focuses on gravity as a universal principle of existence. We meet the first of these metaphorical motifs in the depiction of satellite images of the globe at night. In such images, the geographical map appears quite vaguely, while the lights from the cities become clear. When seen from the satellite perspective, such night light from Kristiansand to Bergen resembles a sickle:

SOMTIIMS aig find og seer an min screen,
seer an regio Norwg-West,
picts takat fra ofven,
seer all ljus om natt, spots eftr spots
so tait og komplex, fra Krisand til Bergn.
SPOTS af ljus i ein sigd,
som om all saman hengr. EIN sigd
klar til ou skera gennom all materie
og all human life. (p. 11)

The image is expanded globally with China as an example ("Chin"), where the light sources that is, the cities, barely can be separated from each other. The sickles now become half-moons which are not as easy to imagine as the half-moon at the south western part of Norway:

… I Chin f. ex.,
der ne siddy kan skillast out,
der infinit mengd af sigd i ljus er.
OG liksom uppo kverodder,
i ein gigant pattern,
vanskl ou vita wat all sigdar tilsamman blir …
OR seer out som half moons,
detta? SOM big mengd half moons

up ner, vid jord undr seg
vid oren jord som ein dark, infinit
univers undr seg? (p. 11)

Following this extension of the metaphor, the narrator reflects allegorically on the possibility of a universal or metaphysical superior source of light:

JA, er det detta wi er?
EIN vorld af half moons?
MEN wat er da oren sol? (p. 11)

The solar-moon relationship is repeated in the depiction of the drifters, the nomadic class in society, those without security system ("seifa system") around them (p. 14). They are clearly a part of society, and they are punished for quite minor offenses (p. 15). It may be the loneliness of the drifters the narrator wants to portray when he characterizes them as isolated suns without any moon to shine at:

DEI er openbara,
hengr umkring som solar.
SOLAR vidout moons ou skinna mot? (p. 14)

The final part of this metaphorical motif is related to the human body. The narrator has once had a bowel infection, and he had to take x-rays of his "botten-torso". He has later on repeatedly looked at his x-ray pictures, and discovered that his hipbones resemble sickles or half-months. This similarity makes him wonder about a possible unexpected and confusing universal unity. Some parts of the narrator are only partly his own, partly something else, "AS IF they live their own lives in me?" (SOM om dei lefr/siner heilt eigne lifs i meg (p. 16)). He cannot control that parts inside him which is something else:

OG ven dei sjuk blir,
kan henda til det doyande,
min breyn kan ne helpa dei. (p. 16)

However, he has no answer to the question of what this other one is. Yet the metaphorical motifs throughout the poem imply a connection between global structures and bodily characteristics at the individual level.

The second group of metaphorical motifs, the gravity metaphors, conveys a similar sense of universal unity.

Wat ne forsvinna kan,
er gravitationen. GRAVITATIONEN
existen ovfr all distans fra mill
sol-agen away
og strick back til uss.
LITL so litl, veik so veik,
men ne zero. GRAVITATIONEN
er det minsta wi kan stola an.
DEN er den onli total
kommunicationen i univers. (p. 21)

The principle is not restricted to the spherical systems of the universe. It also applies on the social level. The people gravitate towards each other. In that way, gravity is also the basic principle of the individual's feelings of love and hatred.

DEN arbeiden ogso i uss.
ALL haf wi
gravitation-
kroppar, tick tock
i oren celln og knokl.
ALL wi arbeiden, all wi spiik: gravitationen.
VEN wi love og hatr: gravitationen. (p. 21)

"Solaris Corrected", therefore, is not just about a future, dystopian society and the oil industry in the North Sea. Along the way, by means of lyrical structures, the poem also points to basic universal forces that form connections and universal unity. It appears as if there is a universalizing feature in the poem—without being dominant.

"Solaris Corrected" shows Øyvind Rimbereid's wide range as a poet. He is one of Norway's most original language artists today, something which is manifested in his constructing a whole new language and being able to use it consistently both grammatically and lyrically. The poem also shows Rimbereid's repertoire as a verse poet and a constructor of poetic metaphors. Simultaneously, "Solaris Corrected" demonstrates that Rimbereid is a highly engaged writer as well, deeply concerned with the challenges of contemporary society. Directing his focus towards historical events, he confronts his readers with fateful changes, changes with potentially irreversible consequences.

In the tradition of Scandinavian modernism, Rimbereid's poem can be said to hark back to the first "green poet" in Norwegian literature, Rolf Jacobsen. In the 1930's he was the first to introduce the world of industry and technology in Norwegian poetry—electrical turbines, airplanes and racing cars. In his later poems the challenges of modern times became an increasingly important topic in his writing. Even more obvious is Rimbereid's connection to the Swedish poet Harry Martinson and his famous work *Aniara. A Review of Man in Time and Space* (*Aniara. En revy om människan i tid och rum*) (1956). Martinson's work is a poem of science fiction, and might be regarded as a precursor to Rimbereid's "Solaris Corrected". However, it is obviously clear that the topic of an ecological crisis and dystopian perspectives have become increasingly relevant in modern poetry both in Scandinavia and Europe, as well as in literature worldwide.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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ISBN 978-3-0365-1524-3