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Swedish Literature Studies

Edited by
Jane Mattisson

Shanghai · Wuhan · West Lafayette

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Contents

187 – 189 Introduction to Special Issue of Swedish Literature Studies
Jane Mattisson

190 – 203 Carl Michael Bellman: Poet and Singer-Song-Writer of the 18th Century
Johan Stenström

204 – 216 The Poem as Concert: Lidner, Oxenstierna and the Unity of the Long Poem
Alfred Sjödin

217 – 226 On Great 19th-Century Swedish Poets
Eva Haettner Aurelius

227 – 234 The Caterpillar Transforming into A Butterfly: The Images of Women in Strindberg's *Zones of the Spirit*
Astrid Regnel

235 – 249 Astrid Lindgren's Twin Roles
Helene Ehriander

250 – 259 Migration and Identity in Swedish and Canadian Historical Novels for Children
Mary Ingemansson

260 – 275 The Doctor and the Pastor: On Love and Evil in Hjalmar Söderberg's *Doctor Glas* and Bengt Ohlsson's *Gregorius*
Lena Ahlin

276 – 290 The Image as a Site of Aesthetic Renegotiation in Kerstin Ekman's *City of Light*
Cecilia Lindhé

291 – 306 Beyond Stieg Larsson: Contemporary Trends and Traditions in Swedish Crime Fiction
Kerstin Bergman

307 – 315 The Labelization and Identity of Lisbeth Salander
Teri Schamp-Bjerede

316 – 327 Life and Death in the Poetry of Tomas Tranströmer
Jane Mattisson

328 – 332 Translating *Aniara*: A Temptation and a Challenge
Wan Zhi

333 – 335 Reflections by a Nobel Jury Member
Kjell Espmark

336 – 337 A Review on *Chickweed Wintergreen*
Jane Mattisson
338 – 339 A Review on *Outside the Calendar*
Jane Mattisson
340 – 351 Beat Generation: From America in the 1960s to China in the 1990s
Fan Xing

目录

187 – 189　瑞典文学研究专刊导言
简·马丁松
190 – 203　卡尔·麦克· 贝尔曼:十八世纪的诗人、歌手和作曲家
约翰·斯特恩斯托姆
204 – 216　诗的音乐会:林德纳,奥珊斯特纳和长诗
阿尔弗雷德·斯约丁
217 – 226　论十九世纪杰出的瑞典诗人
伊娃·黑特纳·奥里利乌斯
227 – 234　化蛹成蝶:斯特林堡《精神区域》中的女性形象
阿斯特丽德·热格里尔
235 – 249　阿斯特里德·林德格林斯的双重身份
海伦·俄瑞安德
250 – 259　瑞典和加拿大儿童历史读物中的迁徙与身份
玛丽·英格曼森
260 – 275　医生与牧师:希尔玛·索德伯格的《格拉斯医生》与本特·奥尔森的《格里高瑞斯》的爱与邪恶主题
林娜·阿林
276 – 290　美学再议的基点:夏丝汀·艾克曼《光之城》的形象
塞西莉亚·林德
291 – 306　超越史迪格·拉森:当代瑞典犯罪小说的传统与发展趋势
科斯汀·伯格曼
307 – 315　莉丝贝·莎兰德的标签化与身份
特里·司干普·比杰里德
316 – 327　托马斯·特朗斯特罗默诗歌中的生与死
简·马丁松
328 – 332　翻译《阿尼阿拉号》的诱惑和挑战
万之
333 – 335　一个诺贝尔奖评委会成员的反思
谢尔·埃斯普马克
336 – 337　评《繁缕鹿蹄草》
简·马丁松
338 – 339　评《日历之外》
简·马丁松

340－351　“垮掉的一代”:从 1960 年代的美国到 1990 年代的中国
樊星

Introduction to Special Issue of Swedish Literature Studies

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The present Issue celebrates the richness and variety of Swedish literature from the late eighteenth century to the present day. It incorporates articles on both prose and poetry; all are written in English. A contribution, concerning the epic work *Aniara* and written in Chinese, is also included by translator Chen Maiping.

Despite its very small population of approximately 9.5 million people, Sweden has produced many internationally acclaimed authors, no fewer than eight of whom have won the Nobel Prize in Literature: Selma Lagerlof (1909), Verner von Heidenstam (1916), Erik Axel Karlfeldt (1931), Pär Lagerkvist (1951), Nelly Sachs (1966; shared), Eyvind Johnson (1974; shared), Harry Martinson (1974; shared) and most recently, Tomas Tranströmer (2011).

The earliest writers discussed in the present Issue were active in the middle of the eighteenth century, which saw the emergence of the Swedish Enlightenment movement and of such literary figures as Olof von Dalin (1708–1763) and Johan Henrik Kellgren (1751–1795). Other important writers, who are included in the present volume, are Carl Michael Bellman (1740–1795), Bengt Lidner (1757–1793) and Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna (1750–1818). In the first article, "Carl Michael Bellman: Poet and Singer–Songwriter of the 18th Century", Johan Stenström discusses some of Bellman's most important works, demonstrating why he has become one of Sweden's most prominent poets. In the following article, "The poem as concert: Lidner, Oxenstierna and the unity of the long poem", Alfred Sjödin discusses selected poems by Bengt Lidner and Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna. With the aid of detailed literary analyses, he explores the close relationship between form and ideology in both poets' works.

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century witnessed two golden ages of Swedish poetry. Some of Sweden's most famous poets, including Esaias Tegnér (1782–1846), Erik Johan Stagnelius (1793–1823), Verner von Heidenstam (1859–1940), Gustaf Fröding (1860–1911) and Erik Axel Karlfeldt (1864–1931) emerged during this period. In "Great 19th Century Swedish Poets", Eva Haettner Aurelius discusses all five poets, their complexity, formal excellence and symbolism, demonstrating their special ability to depict the joy and misery of man. Haettner Aurelius demonstrates how the five poets have contributed to giving both poetry and the poet a prestigious position in Swedish culture.

August Strindberg (1849 – 1912), one of Sweden's greatest playwrights, novelists, poets, essayists and painters is given special attention in Astrid Regnell's article "The Caterpillar transforming into a Butterfly? The images of women in Strindberg's "Zones of the Spirit". Focusing on Strindberg's portrayal of women, Regnell concludes that Strindberg saw women as mediums of man's reconciliation with God.

The centennial of Strindberg's death has been marked by a number of celebrations both in Sweden and abroad. Swedish television has televised several of Strindberg's works, and public lectures on a wide variety of Strindberg's productions have been held throughout Sweden.

Writing at the same time as Harry Martinson, Astrid Lindgren (1907 – 2002) focused on children's literature. The publication of her *Pippi Longstocking* in 1945 is regarded as a milestone in Swedish literature because it revolutionised not only children's literature but the attitude of the Swedish people towards children and their upbringing. In her article "Astrid Lindgren's Twin Roles", Helene Ehriander demonstrates that Lindgren was part of the golden age of children's literature that flourished after the Second World War (1939 – 1945). In her capacity as editor and writer, Lindgren was responsible for promoting children's books by insisting that they maintain the same quality as that pertaining to books for adults.

During the twentieth century, historical novels for children became popular in Sweden. Mary Ingemanson discusses aspects of this development in her comparative article "Migration and Identity in Swedish and Canadian Historical Novels for Children". Ingemanson compares Maj Bylock's *Drakskeppstrilogi* (*Dragon Ship Trilogy*, 1997 – 1998) with three Canadian novels — Kathleen Pearson's *The sky is Falling* (1989), and Barbara Smucker's *Underground to Canada* (1978) and *Days of Terror* (1989), concluding that migration to a new country and the resulting process of adaptation are less dependent on context than on inner strength. She argues that novels of migration can act as important sources of inspiration and comfort to teenage readers.

Lena Ahlin's "The Doctor and the Pastor: On Love and Evil in Hjalmar Söderberg's *Doctor Glas* and Bengt Ohlsson's *Gregorius*" discusses the relations between the two works (*Gregorious* is a response to Söderberg's classic *Doctor Glas*). The first, from the beginning of the twentieth century and the second from 2004, focus on evil. Ahlin explores the Swedish fascination with the dark side of life and why we continue to be drawn to depictions of evil.

In discussing Kerstin Ekman (1933 –), Cecilia Lindhé focuses on Ekman's novel *City of Light* (1983). Renowned for a series of highly successful detective novels and fascinated by psychological and social themes, Ekman explores the complexity of "now" and supplies alternatives to a stereotypical tradition of images of women. Lindhé demonstrates that Ekman's writing investigates the relationship between verbal and visual art while simultaneously testing their ideological powers of signification.

Above all, it is Henning Mankell and Stieg Larsson who are responsible for the popularity of detective fiction in Sweden—a popularity which has spread far beyond the boundaries of the home country. In her article "Beyond Stieg Larsson: Contemporary Trends and Traditions in Swedish Crime Fiction", Kerstin Bergman surveys the

landscape of Swedish crime fiction before and after Larsson's popular *Millenium* trilogy (2005), shedding light on current trends and development in detective fiction, the changing role of the police procedural, the new wave of women writers, recent diversification, and the current Europeanisation of Swedish crime fiction.

Focusing on Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2008), Teri Schamp-Bjerede considers the role of Lisbeth Salander, one of the two protagonists, and her relationship with the computer sub – culture that is such an important feature of the novel. Bjerede illustrates how the use of labels transforms Salander from a negative, reclusive computer hacker to a reluctant but acceptable heroine. Bjerede points to how Larsson exposes not only the benefits but also the liabilities of personal computers.

The final article on literatuare discusses the poetry of last year's Nobel Prize Winner, Tomas Tranströmer. In her article on "Life and Death in the Poetry of Tomas Tranströmer", Jane Mattisson discusses a range of poems, early and recent, arguing that Tranströmer's concrete images provide access to the imminence and reality of death at the same time as they preserve its mysterious nature. Tranströmer's poems, argues Mattisson, can act as agents of change, enabling readers to breach the wall of conventional thinking and regard death from a variety of perspectives.

Following the final article on literature is Chen Maiping's article (in Chinese) on translating Swedish texts into Chinese. As a traslator, Chen Maiping gives an introduction to *Aniara by* Harry Martinson sharing some of his reflections on translating the well-known epic work into Chinese.

This special Issue on Swedish literature concludes with personal observations about the functions of the Nobel Prize Committee. These are provided by one of its members, Kjell Espmark. Espmark draws attention to the fact that since 1946, it is the pioneers of literature who have been favoured. At the same time, the Swedish Academy also wishes to draw attention to less well-known authors and new oeuvres; the 1980s saw a growing ambition to recognise innovators around the world. Espmark 's comments conclude with an intriguing personal reflection.

Finally, two book reviews are included, of Harry Martinson's *Chickweed Wintergreen* (2010) and Kjell Espmark's *Outside the Calendar. Selected Poems* (2012). Both have recently been translated into English.

It is our sincere hope that the present collection of articles will give a taste of the variety, depth and complexity of Swedish literature from the mid – eighteenth century to the present day. Swedish literature, adult as well as children's, is blossoming and continues to be translated into a wide variety of languages. We look forward to more titles translated into Chinese.

责任编辑:杨革新

Carl Michael Bellman: Poet and Singer-Song-Writer of the 18th Century

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Abstract Carl Michael Bellman (1740 – 1795) was a poet and songwriter. As a young man during "The Age of Freedom" he took a very active part in Stockholm's nightlife. As he was good at extemporizing a song or a poem, he became popular in the circles of pleasure-seeking young men in which he moved. During the 1760s he wrote drinking songs and Biblical travesties. He became much sought after and was asked to entertain not only at taverns but also in private homes. Bellman invented a parodic order, the *Bacchi Order*, in which he played the different roles himself. After this early period of apprenticeship he gradually developed the style that would yield *Fredman's Epistles* (1790), the epitome of his works. The *Epistles* represent a unique mixture of opposites: crude jokes and sublime poetry, glimpses of Stockholm's underworld and elevated scenes from classical mythology, the harsh conditions of the narrow streets of the Swedish capital and the pastoral life lived on its outskirts. Singing, drinking, and dancing are prominent themes in his work. This song cycle was followed by a song collection titled *Fredman's Songs* (1791). During the 19th century Bellman's reputation as a poet grew gradually. Today he is considered to be one of Sweden's most prominent poets.
Key words poetry; songs; parody; musical parody; Biblical travesty; the 18th century

To present-day Swedes Carl Michael Bellman (1740 – 95) is the best known of all native poets from the 18th century. Virtually everybody is able to quote or sing one or two lines or even stanzas from his songs although it is more than 220 years since his two main collections —*Fredman's Epistles* (1790) and *Fredman's Songs* (1791) — were published. One important reason for his enduring popularity among ordinary people is that his poetry is set to music, another that his two main themes never go out of fashion: drinking and love-making.

Bellman grew up during the period known in Swedish history as the Age of Freedom (1714 – 1772), a period following the death of King Charles XII whose disastrous wars had devastated the country's economy. Gone were the days of "greatness" of the Caroline era when Sweden was an important European player. Political power now devolved on the Four Estates: the nobility, the clergy, the burghers and the

peasants. There were two dominating parties: "the caps" and "the hats", the former oriented towards Russia, the latter towards France. This was an era of political and financial turmoil but also one of pleasure and entertainment. Nightlife flourished. Like many other gentlemen of his age, the young Bellman relished Stockholm's nocturnal delights.

Bellman was born and raised in Stockholm, Sweden's capital, and lived there practically all his life except for spending one term as a student at Uppsala University. At the age of eighteen he began a not very prosperous career as a public servant. He would spend the nights at taverns with other young men, singing, drinking and gambling. It soon became apparent that he was a skilful improviser. As a result he became enormously popular among his friends, who appreciated his ability always to extemporize a song or a poem. Pre-eminent among the song genres that Bellman cultivated and his pleasure-seeking friends delighted in were the drinking song and the Biblical travesty.

Drinking Songs and Biblical Travesties

Bellman's earliest drinking songs were written in the tradition inaugurated by earlier 17th-century poets like Runius, Holmström, and others. In turn, they were influenced by the style of the drinking songs popular among German students. But Bellman also took over traits from the French tradition. He knew French and he met Swedes who had been abroad and picked up popular songs; he also met Frenchmen in Stockholm — actors, artists, diplomats — and had several opportunities to listen to French songs.[1] He also learned how to use musical parody as a comic device. By taking a well-known tune and setting new words to it, a humorous effect could be achieved. The effect depended upon the listener's awareness of the contrast between the original and the new lyrics. This technique was very popular among French vaudeville poets such as Vadé, Favart, and Collé. During these years Bellman also developed his own dramatic style of performance, resulting in him being characterized as a one-man-theatre. He sang, played, acted, and imitated all sorts of musical instrument and sounds. Wherever he performed he aroused the audience's enthusiasm.

Serious songs based on a Biblical material had been sung in Sweden for a long time. When Bellman invented the Biblical travesty he introduced a new humorous genre. Brought up as a Christian and being the grandson of a dean, who was also Rector of St Mary's Parish in Stockholm, he had been familiar with the stories of the Bible since early childhood. However, in his travesties he made exclusive use of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha. Even today, Swedes of all ages are familiar with the song "Old Man Noah" who "rowed his boat ashore" and "bought himself some bottles". The poet favoured the more frivolous episodes which he adapted in his songs, for example the story about Joachim in Babylon and his young wife Susanna, or the tale of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

The Bacchi Order

During the 18th century it became fashionable to belong to one or several fraternal Or-

ders. Every Order had its own ceremonial, symbols, decorations, and costumes. The most distinguished of these orders was that of the Freemasonry. Both King Gustav III and his brother Carl were freemasons. Being a member of a number of orders was expected of a man of important social standing. Always ready to stress the humorous aspects of any phenomenon, Bellman invented a parodic order, in which he played the different roles himself. Later on, when the gallery of personages had grown, he may have involved other actors to participate in the different chapters of the Bacchi Order. To be initiated one was supposed to have had at least twice been found lying in full view in the gutter. Even if the order was a fictional one, Bellman knew how to strengthen the humorous effect: he made famous Stockholm characters, known for their predilection for drinking, members of the Bacchi Order: brewers, innkeepers, and well-known drinkers. Stockholm was a small capital. It was common knowledge if a personal of some standing had fallen on evil times because of heavy drinking.

In 1769 a young nobleman and poet, Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna, attended a meeting at the home of one of Stockholm's burghers where Bellman held one of hisparodic chapters. In his diary he wrote that Bellman "holds chapters at times, dubs knights in accordance with their merits, and last evening he delivered an oration to the memory of a deceased knight. Everything was set to verse with melodies from operas. He sings himself and plays the cittern."[2] The chapter Oxenstierna is referring to is about the dead Knight Lundholm, a well-known brandy distiller in Stockholm: "Öfver bränvins-brännaren Lundholm". Bellman's audience was familiar with the lyrical drama from which Bellman had borrowed the melody: Charles Favart's *Annette et Lubin*, performed at the Royal Opera in Stockholm fourteen times between 1763 and 1770. The musical parody is evident in this example: while the beauty and the fair skin of the fifteen-year old Annette is described in the lyrical drama, Bellman creates a burlesque contrast when describing the old drunkard Lundholm:

> Thy morning sunburn'd seldom clear,
> Thy high-noon was but dusk, I fear,
> Thy nose a sunset hue did wear;
> A purplish posy
> Of cheeks blue and rosy
> O'ershadow'd her.[3]

Oxenstierna was so overwhelmed by what he had seen and heard that he had difficulties sleeping the next few nights: "While I was lying in bed I suddenly burst into laughter".

Among the originals of Stockholm one character caught Bellman's eye very early on. Jean Fredman was the owner of a watchmaker's business which was so successful that he was elected Alderman of his guild. For some reason — maybe his unhappy marriage with an older widow — he started to drink heavily. Bellman knew about him since his childhood and now he witnessed the decline of the former Royal Watchmaker. A short time after Fredman's death in May 1767 Bellman wrote his first song about him, "Fredmans begravning", "Fredman's funeral". This was the start of a series of

songs with Fredman as protagonist.[4]

Fredman's Epistles: The Epitome of Bellman's Work

The years when Bellman wrote his drinking songs and Biblical travesties as well the songs of the Bacchi Order may be regarded as a period of apprenticeship. From 1767 and throughout the 1770s, he wrote a number of epistles. During the 1780s he was kept busy by other activities, but his poetic production started to grow again by the end of this decade. Bellman's original idea was to write one hundred epistles distributed in four parts, each comprising twenty-five epistles. The concept of the epistle was taken from the Bible. Whereas St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians and the Galatians, Fredman addressed his epistles to the landlords of well-known taverns or to the brothers and sisters who frequented a certain inn on a regular basis: "To the faithful brothers at Terra Nova in Fork Alley" (*Fredman's Epistle* No. 5), "To the Mistress of the Cock Tavern" (*Fredman's Epistle* No. 67). Instead of God's word Fredman preaches the gospel of Bacchus, enjoining his congregation to love, drink and be merry. However, Bellman soon abandoned the idea. He may have found the arrangement too much of a constraint.

Fredman's Epistles is a collection of poems set to music. The scene is Stockholm among society's castaways. The story is loosely knit and coherent only to a certain extent. Each epistle is a separate episode. The earliest of the epistles "have a fantastically excited tempo, an insane impatience", in the words of Paul Britten Austin, Bellman's English translator and biographer.[5] He makes another apt point regarding the epistle's combination of word and music:

> Most ingeniously they are set to the music! Often not one, but two prosodies are involved — a musical and a verbal. Each is as it were superimposed upon the other, so that in the most surprising way the music can give rise to an entirely new dimension not to be found in the text alone, lending an aesthetic detachment or offsetting the verses' humour with undertones of unexpected melancholy. Even the melodies seem to be transformed and their purely musical significance heightened by Bellman's bold juxtapositition of musical, pictorial and verbal values. *Fredman's Epistles* make astonishing reading. To hear them sung, after only being familiar with them as verse, is like seeing the sun come out behind a stained-glass window.[6]

As new epistles were written, the gallery of figures kept growing. Fredman is joined by his female counterpart, Ulla Winblad, "Nymph and Priestess of the temple of Bacchus", as she is characterized in *Fredman's Epistles*. In real life Ulla's name was Maja-Stina Kiellström, a factory girl, known for her loose living. In the epistles she is dancing in the ballrooms or attending picnics in the pastoral environments outside Stockholm. Wherever she goes she is attractive to men, and Bellman is always ready to provide a glimpse of her physical apparition: her curly black hair, the clothes she is wearing, her posture and her swaying movements when dancing. Even though Bellman often stresses her dubious occupation — "Each day thou standest bride" — he

never moralizes.

Corporal Mollberg and Father Movitz are two other prominent characters. Mollberg is a dancing-master while Movitz is frequently depicted as an unsuccessful lover or as someone who gets beaten up. A couple of German names also occur, Jergen Puckel and Benjamin Schwalbe, an illustration of the strong German influence in Stockholm which goes back to the Middle Ages and the power of the Hansa. Quite a few of these figures play several musical instruments, providing Bellman with an excuse for including the imitations of musical instruments which are such a frequent feature of these songs. Initially, this had to do with Bellman's own performance and his ability to imitate.

One of his most beloved songs— it is still frequently sung — was written in 1773, *Epistle* No. 48, "Wherein is depicted Ulla Winblad's voyage home from Hessingen, in Lake Mälaren, one summer's morning, 1769". Hessingen is an island east of Stockholm. Fredman, Ulla, her fiancé Norström, Movitz and others are sailing towards Stockholm. It is a beautiful morning. They pass well-known landmarks. Fredman observes and comments:

> Now the sun gleams in the sky,
> Mirror'd in the water;
> Early breezes by and by
> Fill the mains'l tauter.
> On a hayboat, with an oar
> Olle shoves off from the shore.
> Who's that in the cabin door?
> Kerstin, Skipper's daughter!

The landscape changes from pastoral to urban as they approach town:

> Golden spires all early shine;
> Cocks and crosses gleaming;
> Rosy hues of dawn, so fine,
> In the water seeming.
> There a child upon the strand
> Gathers pebbles in his hand
> To bombard a feather'd band
> Where they calm are swimming.

Agony, Disease and Death

Even if singing, drinking and dancing play an important role in the epistles they also contain themes of a more elegiac nature. One of the best-loved epistles is No. 23: "Which is a soliloquy, when Fredman lay in front of the Creep-in Tavern opposite the Bank Building, a summer night in the year 1769". He suffers from a bad hangover. Tormented by his physical condition, he accuses his mother of thoughtlessness in be-

getting him.

> Ah, tell me, mother, who then was it sent thee
> Just to my father's bed,
> Where thou alas the spark of life once lent me,
> I, poor slave of dread!
>   But for thy flame
>   I bear my pain,
> Wander full wearily.
>   After thy fooling,
>   Where thou layst cooling,
> Burn'd my blood in thee.
> Thou shouldst have padlock had to thy maidenhead;... flauto
>   To thy maidenhead!

The rather drastic curses voiced in this epistle include his father, the bed where he was conceived, and even the carpenter who made it. After a while the shutters of the tavern open and Fredman is able to down the first dram of the day. This is the turning point. Slowly Fredman's spirits awaken and his outlook changes: "Thanks, father, mother too, thanks to both of you". The song ends with Fredman wishing he could meet his father and that they could get drunk together.

Stockholm was a small capital with vast social and hygienic problems. Drinking was widespread, not only among men but also among women and children. Although Stockholm had a population of only 70, 000 people the number of taverns was extensive, about 700. Prostitution flourished. As a result, sexually transmitted diseases were common. Other infectious diseases spread easily too. There were only a few wells inside the town borders but the water was often infected and undrinkable. These are the conditions on which *Fredman's Epistles* are based.

Poor hygienic standards, poverty and an overcrowded city centre were other causes of infection. In one of the epistles the effect of tuberculosis is described: "To Father Movitz during his last sickness, consumption. Elegy" (*Epistle* No. 30).

> Drain off thy glass! See death upon thee waiting.
> Sharpens his sword and peers in at the door.
> Be not afraid! He but essays the grating,
> Friend, to thy tomb; and grants thee one year more.
> Movitz, consumption is laying thee in the grave, man!
> 'cello:... Pluck an octave, man!
> Tune thy sweet notes, sing life's fair spring of yore. :||:

Some of the classic symptoms of this, in many cases, lethal disease are described or touched upon: chronic cough ("Heavens, thou diest! Each cough with fear inspiring"), sweating ("Sweaty thy palm is"), fever ("small cheeks hotly burning"), and loss of weight ("Shrunken thy chest, and shoulders as of lath"). This rather

naturalistic representation rests partly upon the tradition of Bellman's poetic forerunners in the 17th century, among whom death is a regular topic. Death appears in allegorical shape with the scythe as an attribute.

Death is never far away in Bellman's poetry, not even when he is praising the pleasures of life. The thought of death often appears unexpectedly. For example, in the midst of a tumultuous ball, Fredman's awareness of death is suddenly revealed:

> Hurrah, hear Ulla singing,
> Fröja's temple loudly ringing;
> Fiery darts see Cupid flinging.
> Drunken I :||:
> In Charon's ferry lie. (Fredman's Epistle No. 3)

In this example, the speaker's impending demise is briefly alluded to at the end of the epistle; in other poems the presence of death is much more manifest. In several epistles the setting is a churchyard and the subject matter a funeral. *Epistle* No. 54, "At Corporal Boman's grave in St. Katarina Churchyard", refers to begin with to the pastoral, but in a negative or reversed way: "Never an Iris upon these pallid fields / Pluck'd such humblest flower / As scent in shepherd's dwelling yields". In the following stanza the gloomy churchyard is described with its graves and crosses. It is late autumn. Every now and then Bellman makes use of contrasting techniques in his epistles: they start solemnly but end on a very different note. Such is the case of No. 54. As soon as the characters make their entry, the situation changes drastically. In the fourth stanza, the attention is drawn towards Boman's widow, Fredman and Movitz. She stands there sobbing by the grave while the two gentlemen propose a toast to her: "Skål Madam!"

Bellman himself was often asked to write poems on deceased people. Familiar with the conventions and the "high style" of this genre, he knew how to hint at his audience's consciousness of these conventions. The most important element of such poems was to celebrate the deceased person and to praise all his or her virtues. In the last stanza of *Epistle* No. 54 Fredman gives a much more straightforward opinion of the dead Boman, known for his short temper and willingness to fight:

> Boman, I thank thee for ev'ry single day,
> Both when thou embraced me
> And when thou sworest in the fray.

Eventually, Fredman turns to the widow with rather harsh advice:

> Widow Boman, cease thy weeping, prithee!
> Hear our Movitz' harp! No longer griefe thee,
> And instead :||:
> Chose another corp'ral to thy bed.

Bellman's Poetic Technique

Many attempts have been made to characterize the peculiar nature of the *Epistles*. The impressionistic qualities of Bellman's songs have frequently been stressed. Fredman reacts to and comments on the looks and actions of the other personages. Observing their behaviour, he makes brief remarks about individuals in the crowd, while conveying vivid impressions of the dancers' movements in the ballrooms, the whirling skirts and the sound of the heels clopping against the wooden floor. The impression is that the action takes place *here* and *now*. The *Epistles* are essentially dramatic. Most of the songs are written in the present tense so that everything seems to happen simultaneously. Without any clear reference to a specific person, different voices are heard from the noisy crowds of dancers and drinkers in the taverns of the Old Town of Stockholm or the dance halls of Gröna Lund, the entertainment district outside town.

In a short but influential study, Staffan Björck has pointed out that the specific character of the *Epistles* has to do with the role of the protagonist Fredman. First, it is important to emphasize the fundamental difference between Bellman, the cultivated poet, and his invention, Fredman, the ragged drunkard. Throughout the *Epistles*, Fredman serves as an energetic master of ceremonies. He makes exclamations, salutes people, asks questions, and gives orders: "Hi there, musicians, give vent to the waldhorn" (No. 4), "Play, Father Berg, in tears / Thy sorry pipe intone" (No. 12), "Servant, sir, Mollberg, what are you at?" (No. 45). Sometimes the dialogue between Fredman and somebody else also has a descriptive function:

> Say, Father Berg, the devil confound her,
> Who's that so fat, asquint at the counter?
> The old girl as ever was in
> Thermopolium? It's her, gadzoon! (No. 9)

Fredman seems anxious to give his listeners and readers as much information as possible without having to burden his poetry with long descriptions or narrations. Therefore, information about occurrences and settings is provided by the dialogue and Fredman's exclamations. Much of this information seems superfluous for the people within the fiction. He appears to address them but the information he gives is meant for us, his listeners or readers far away in time and space. Fredman combines the role of being the master of the party and the role of being a reporter who is referring in the present tense to what is happening in front of him. By means of this rather simple observation, Björck has to some extent identified the rather complex poetic nature of the *Epistles*.[7]

Bellman's Use of Roman Mythology

An important feature of the epistles is the mythological element. Mythology is such an integral feature of Bellman's style that it is impossible to imagine his poetry without it, as Nils Afzelius has remarked. Not One major classical device that Bellman recurrently makes use of is the attribute: Bacchus with his glass or barrel, Venus with her

shell, Triton with his trident. But Bellman has extended the poetic use of the attribute to comprise not only the world of the Roman gods but also that of ordinary people and everyday life. Certain professions are easy to identify because of a few distinct features. Bellman is always eager to make this connection between occupation and tool manifest in his poetry. The blacksmith is distinguished by his sledge, the soldier by his rifle, as in *Epistle* No. 48. Sometimes this device is used for humorous or even absurd purposes, as for instance when the turner is observed in the crowd of the ballroom and Fredman notices that he has brought his folding rule with him when dancing (No. 62).

Bellman provides a fusion of a realistic world of prostitutes and drunkards and a mythological world of Roman gods. Fredman and Ulla Winblad are momentarily transformed into Bacchus and Venus. An effect of double-exposure is achieved. When the poet was planning the two first parts of the epistles he attached great importance to the structure and order of the songs. Even if it was never realized, there are traits left of this original plan. *Epistles* 25 and 50 — the final poems of part one and part two respectively — are of outstanding grandeur. No. 25 describes Ulla's voyage across the harbour to Djurgården, the royal hunting ground east of Stockholm but also a place for entertainment, for dancing and drinking. To begin with, Venus/Ulla is carried up on the waves with a mythological suite of angels, tritons, dolphins, zephyrs and water nymphs hailing the goddess. When the party arrives at its destination the mythological apparatus is overshadowed by a more realistic and wanton series of events involving the personages of the poem. Ulla is transformed from goddess into a human woman. The magnificent mythological depiction might have been inspired by François Boucher's famous masterpiece *The Triumph of Venus* (1740). The painting was owned by the royal family and was on display at Drottningholm Castle in Bellman's time.

Epistle 50, the counterpart of No. 25, is titled "Concerning his last glimpse of Ulla Winblad, on her return from Djurgården". The impression of splendour is striking here too:

Phoebus enlivens
The clouds in the heavens,
With cities and havens
    He gladdens our eye.
Stamping and snorting,
His horses, cavorting,
Are frisking and sporting
    And neigh to the sky.
Stormclouds rumble
Where thunderbolts tumble;
Diana's shot bruises
The oak-trees and spruces.
'Mid lightning flashes
E'en Jupiter dashes
And royally splashes

'Midst gods on high.

The original publishing plan was never realized but the place of some of the songs still suggests this original structure. Bellman had to wait until he was fifty years old to see his epistles in print.

Bellman and King Gustav III

In 1772 King Gustav III staged his successful "revolution" without spilling a drop of blood. Bellman wrote a song to honour the occasion, "Gustavs skål" ("Gustav's toast), which drew the King's attention to the poet. Up to now Bellman had received a small salary from his post in the Administration of Customs. His wealthy friends had probably given him a helping hand once in a while, but throughout his life he lived beyond his means and was constantly in need of money. From 1775 on, he received an annual grant from the King who also appointed him Secretary of the newly founded State Lottery.

Bellman could call himself Royal Court Secretary. He had a regular income and was now able to marry Lovisa Grönlund, who was his junior by fifteen years. The marriage took place in 1777 and resulted in the birth of four boys. Lovisa Bellman outlived her husband by more than half a century, dying only in 1847.

In his early *Epistles* Bellman depicts the illustrious life of taverns and ballrooms. After being introduced at the Royal Court, he was more careful in his choice of subjects. Instead of the hasty mode made up of rapid impressions that he had used hitherto, the *Epistles* he wrote now became more epic. Nature now plays a more important role than before.

From the middle of the 1770s and through the 80s Bellman was from time to time asked to perform at the Royal Court. The King, Gustav III, was obsessed with the theatre. He wrote plays, he staged dramas, he even acted himself. Also Bellman was involved in his theatrical work, writing comedies and acting. He was not very successful as a dramatist but, on the other hand, his performance of certain comic stage characters was much appreciated. Bellman was also busy writing large numbers of occasional poems and patriotic verse. He was a member of several fraternal orders in which he was expected to produce verses. All these activities had a negative impact upon his production of epistles.

The Publication of Fredman's Epistles

It seemed as if *Fredman's Epistles* would never be published. Printing music sheets was expensive since every single page had to be engraved on copper. However, a new method was developed which made the procedure cheaper and less time-consuming. The music publisher who introduced the new method in Sweden decided to print the collection. Johan Henrik Kellgren, a distinguished poet and member of the newly founded Swedish Academy, was asked to write a preface, a frontispiece displaying the poet's portrait was engraved by the artist Johan Fredrik Martin, one of Bellman's friends. Kellgren's participation is remarkable since he was considered as being one of the best poets of his time but also because he had made an attack on Bellman in

one of his poems. Obviously, he had modified his opinion. *Fredman's Epistles* was released on 16 October 1790. Bellman received a small pecuniary reward and eight copies.

When Bellman realized that his *Epistles* would at last be published, he became so enthusiastic and inspired that within a few months he wrote some of his most brilliant epistles. He had abandoned the plan of issuing one hundred pieces in one single volume. Instead, the collection comprises eighty-two poems. The work is rounded off with an epistle in which Fredman bids farewell to Ulla but also to life, No. 82, "or, An unexpected leave-taking, declared at Ulla Winblad's breakfast on the greensward, a summer's morning".

A last time upon the greensward
A fond leave-taking I'll to thee afford,
Ulla! Farewell thy beauty:
Let ev'ry instrument resound.
Fredman sees in this minute,
His debt to nature at its limit;
Clotho has done her duty,
A button snipt for Charon to impound.
Let Love abound
All Fröja's seed rewarding,
By Bacchus gown'd!
A last time upon this greensward
A bride was Ulla Winblad crown'd
Corno... A bride was Ulla crown'd.

As in many other of Bellman's poems love, life and death are entwined. Venus' Nordic counterpart, Fröja, is invoked, and the last words of the collection echo a phrase uttered in one of the early *Epistles*: "Each day thou standest bride" (No. 3).

Fredman's Songs

When *Fredman's Epistles* had been released there were still lots of songs good enough to be published. It was decided that another collection would be printed. *Fredman's Songs* came out one year after the *Epistles*. This collection is much more varied when it comes to themes and styles. It comprises drinking songs, Biblical travesties and songs from the Bacchi Order. Some of the songs has been written in Bellman's youth, while others were of more recent origin. Some of them are among Bellman's most popular songs, for example No. 21, a drinking song which even today is frequently sung at dinner parties:

Away we trot, soon, ev'ryone
From this our noisy bacchanal,
When death calls out: "Good neighbour, come,
Thine hour-glass, friend, is full!"

Old fellow, let thy crutches be,
Thou youngster, too, my law obey,
The sweetest nymph who smiles on thee
    Shall take thine arm today.

Is the grave too deep? Then take a sip,
Raise the brimming goblet to thy lip!
Yet a sip! Ditto one, ditto two, ditto three…
    Then die contentedly.

Bellmanconstantly paid poetic tributes to Gustav III. Since Sweden was at war with Russia he produced patriotic poetry celebrating Gustav III as a successful master of war even if he was not. However, one of the poet's most inspired royal tributes is the peaceful song titled "Haga", *Fredman's Song* No. 64. Everything seems to indicate that it was written in 1791. Haga is the name of the King's favourite building project. Gustav III had a vision of making a Nordic Versailles but the plan was never finished. But Bellman's song was completed and it has been sung ever since:

O'er the misty park of Haga
In the frosty morning air
To her green and fragile dwelling
Se the butterfly repair;
E'en the least of tiny creatures,
By the sun and zephyrs warm'd,
Wakes to new and solemn raptures
In a bed of flowers form'd.
[…]
How delightful 'tis to savour
Within a park so rare,
Both a royal monarch's favour
And the greetings of the fair!
Ev'ry glance his eye dispenses
Asks of gratitude a tear;
E'en the sullen in his sorrow
Must at Haga find new cheer.

Bellman's Last Years and His Posthumous Reputation

Carl Michael Bellman died in 1795 at the age of fifty-five. During the immediately preceding years everything had been going downhill. Bellman had contracted tuberculosis, had been arrested for debt, and had to spend the winter of 1794 in the Palace guardhouse. As a courtier, he did not have to go to an ordinary prison. The winter that year was severe, and the room where he was incarcerated was cold and damp. It was a broken man who was released in June 1794. He died the following winter.

Throughout the following century, Bellman's fame grew constantly. In 1829 a monument was erected in his honour. This was the first time such a tribute was paid to a Swedish citizen who did not have a religious or royal affiliation. Bellman's works, especially *Fredman's Epistles*, were adapted for other arts and media. His songs were performed by male quartets and choirs in the university towns of Uppsala and Lund. Fredman plays were staged and performed in Stockholm and/or they were played across the country by travelling theatrical companies. Artists used Bellman's works as a source for their paintings and prints. Bellman was used even as a trademark: Bellman's punch and Bellman's tobacco. His themes and style were recurrently used by other poets in order to create a certain Bellmanesque atmosphere.

Since lovemaking and alcohol — Venus and Bacchus — are common topics in Bellman's poetry, the frankness of the 18th century posed a problem for the bigoted 19th century. The indelicate songs were restricted to the male coteries. According to the morals of the time, women should be protected from crude manners and coarse jokes.

During the 20th century Bellman's reputation has steadily grown. The number of languages into which his poetry has been translated is continuously increasing. According to the home page of The Bellman Society, approximately 4,000 interpretations in 20 languages have been made. Bellman's life and songs have also been made the subject of adaptations in the form of films, television series, and musicals.

Notes

1. Nils Afzelius, "Carl Michael Bellman", *Ny illustrerad svensk litteraturhistoria II.* Ed. E. N. Tigerstedt (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1967) 259.

2. Quoted from Paul Britten Austin, *The Life and Songs of Carl Michael Bellman*. Genius of the Swedish Rococo (Malmö: Allhem Publishers, 1967) 42. All translations of Bellman's work into English in this article are made by Paul Britten Austin. Quotations in English of Bellman's poetry are taken from Paul Britten Austin's translations: *Fredman's Epistles & Songs. A Selection in English with A Short Introduction by Paul Britten Austin. Translated by Paul Britten Austin*. Stockholm: Proprius Förlag AB/Unesco Publishing, 1990, 1999

3. This song was later published in the collection *Fredman's Songs*, 1791. 10

4. This song was later published in the collection *Fredman's Songs*, 1791. 28

5. Paul Britten Austin, *The Life and Songs of Carl Michael Bellman. Genius of the Swedish Rococo* (Malmö: Allhem Publishers, 1967) 62

6. Paul Britten Austin, *The Life and Songs of Carl Michael Bellman. Genius of the Swedish Rococo* (Malmö: Allhem Publishers, 1967) 63.

7. See Staffan Björck, "Fredman som conférencier. En synpunkt på Bellmans konstnärsskap", *Kring Bellman*. Ed. Lars – Göran Eriksson. (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1964) 47 – 60

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The Poem as Concert: Lidner, Oxenstierna and the Unity of the Long Poem

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Abstract This article addresses the problem of literary unity as it is posed by two late eighteenth century long poems, "Året 1783" by Bengt Lidner and *Skördarne* by Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna. By investigating the relations between poetry, poetics and practical criticism, it seeks to document a situation in which new poems failed to achieve the kind of unity found in the epic poem. Instead, the poems are valued in terms of their ability to seamlessly weave together disparate material. The article then describes the reception of these poems during the romantic period, when literary unity was primarily understood in terms of "lyric" unity. What was at stake in the fragmentary unity of these poems, wedged as it were between the two paradigms of poetics?
Key words literary unity; the long poem; poetics/aesthetics; mimesis

The view of poetic unity is one of the key issues that divide a neo-classical poetics from a romantic aesthetic, in Sweden as elsewhere. During the late eighteenth century we find a production of long poems that seems wedged between these two conceptions—the one dominant and the other not yet fully emerged—and that in a way could be read as a challenge to them both. They represent the import of innovative English models (for example, the poems of Young and Thomson) on a Swedish literary scene where neo-classical orthodoxy had been strengthened during the course of the century. There is a certain tension between the way these poems relate to the outside world, and the ideal of unity that governed neo-classical poetics. When the question of unity takes a subjective swerve during the romantic period, much of this tension, and the reason for its existence, is displaced. I would like to approach this problematic group of texts by studying the interplay between poetic practice, poetics and criticism. First, a detour through the genre terminology of Swedish neo-classicism will be necessary.

The Long "Poëme" as an Alternative to the Epic

In 1797 the Swedish Academy, guardians of literary orthodoxy and the center of the official Swedish cultural production, announced a prize for the best "*poëm* to the muses of the theatre". The attached preliminary plan shows that a quite thourough description of the subject was desired. The art of acting in general, the relation between

tragedy and history writing, the way the passions portrayed on the stage would influence the beholders, how comedy could teach by amusing: these were all deemed important parts of the subject to be treated.[1] This plan was supplied in order to give guidance to aspiring poets, but it was also stressed that: "The mode of representation, the order of the parts and the dress of the words are for the Poet to choose, as well as the genre and the verse form."[2] Apparently, the academy demanded a poem of some length, but hardly an epic or even a narrative poem. What should not go unnoticed is the word "poëm(e)", which is not fully as general a term as it might seem. As Lennart Breitholtz has shown, this french loanword was used during the eighteenth century as an alternative to the native terms "skaldestycke" and "skaldedikt" (roughly "poet's poem", or possibly "bardic poem"). The exact meaning of these words is difficult to pin down, but it seems that they were generally used to indicate a longer, serious poem with the intention not just to amuse but also to instruct.[3]

It should also be noted that the French word "poëme" was not synonymous with "poem" *tout court*, but derived from more specific usages such as "poëme dramatique" or "poëme épique". During the classical age in France, a true *poëme* usually meant an epic one, but in the eighteenth century the term would eventually accommodate large-scale descriptive and didactic works as well, as has been demonstrated by Dominique Combe.[4] The somewhat amputated word "poëme" (without a specifying adjective) could thus signify a poem of a certain length, seriousness and ambition, but that would not be subject to the more detailed prescriptions for an epic or a dramatic poem.

In this way, the not very revealing terms "poëm" or "skaldestycke" allowed for a certain degree of experiment: descriptive and didactic poems, and some poems of mixed genre, are given this label. We should not be misled by the fact that these were sometimes lumped into the genre of the "didactic poem". The didactic poem, though of increasing popularity, had to a large extent escaped rigid codification by neo-classical poetics. This is mainly due to the fact that its discursive rather than mimetic character was hard to square with the neo-classical view of art as an imitation of nature.[5] When treated by poetics it was usually recommended that the dry precepts of the didactic poem should be relieved by inset narratives or by a more descriptive style of presentation.[6] This implies mixing genres and literary techniques, and from this perspective we can see similarities between seemingly different works. As Richard Terry has written of the English long poems of this kind, these are "poems indeed whose very family resemblance derives in good part from their defiance of genre."[7] The word "poëme" figures on the front page of Gustaf Fredrik Gyllenborg's *Essay on the art of poetry* (*Försök om skaldekonsten*), a didactic poem, but it was also used of Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna's descriptive nature poems in the vein of James Thomson's *The Seasons*.

Whatever the proportions between discursive or mimetic presentation, it is obvious that these poems do not conform to the idea of unity derived from epic composition. Neo-classicism had turned into dogma the recommendation of Aristotle (*Poetics* 1451a) that the fable should represent a single, complete action, composed in such a

way that the poem would immediately fall apart, should one element or another be removed or change place. It goes without saying that these criteria could be applied to the didactic poem only as a vague analogy, which of course had not prevented some theoreticians, like Charles Batteux, from trying.[8] In the non-epic long poem, the order of its parts could easily be changed. Instead of a unity based on representations of action, poets chose subjects that offered a frame to the material, but not properly speaking a structure. A popular instance is the "seasons" poems, which in the manner of *The Seasons* divided the poem into four books. If this accomplished a division into "books" or "cantos", it did not give much guidance to the disposition within the chapters. To some extent, the order between the different sections becomes reversible.

It is a symptom of the loose composition of these poems that while they generally were of a forbidding length, they could easily supply excerpts for anthologies, such as Per Adam Wallmark's *The Beauties of the Swedish Language* (*Swenska språkets skönheter*, 1820 – 28). The meticulous organization of this anthology allows excerpts from Oxenstierna's poems to be included under such headings and sub-headings as: "A) Natural description I. In general. 3. The times of day a) Morning."[9] The anthologist could without problem pick the poems apart to create a sampler of Swedish poetry, and thus give free rein to the "*love to Parts*" condemned by Alexander Pope in the *Essay on Criticism*.[10] But for the critic who had taken to heart the lessons of masters such as Pope, it was necessary to form a judgment on the unity of the poem as a whole. We can observe this mechanism at work in a review of the failed epic *Gustaf Wasa* (1785) by Olof Celsius. The critic at first gives the reader some excerpts and praises them, but then proceeds to add that

> A poem may contain beautiful parts of this kind, and still as a whole be pretty wretched; in the same way, one can always in a lousy portrait find a beautiful eye or some other part that has all theperfection one could ask for. It is therefore necessary to view this poem in its totality, to observe how the different parts connect with each other and with the poem as a whole, and to that purpose examine it according to the rules of art.[11]

This seemsto be the standard procedure of critics faced with an epic poem. It was to be challenged by the non-epic long poems. While their format made them activate a reading of the epic kind, their unity depended not on plot but on weaving together disparate parts as seamlessly as possible.

Lidner, Oxenstierna and the Art of Transitions

Let us now turn to two "Skaldestycken" or "Poëmes" that occupy interesting positions between "Enlightenment" and "Romanticism" in handbooks of Swedish literary history. While they differ from each other in many ways, they nevertheless show remarkable similarities in their uneasy relation to the classical idea of unity. I have chosen the poems "The year 1783" ("Året 1783", 1784) by Bengt Lidner, an almost journalistic poem surveying the world events of that year, and Oxenstierna's *The Harvest* (1796), a comprehensive depiction of the Swedish countryside and its agricultur-

al labour, treated in a didactic as well as descriptive fashion. The two might seem strange bedfellows. Oxenstierna, one of the first members of the Swedish Academy, is a fairly typical example of what has been called an "ämbetsförfattare", an "official author" who earned his living not from selling his books but by being tied to the representative public sphere of the court and offered posts in the chancellery. This type of writer was only beginning to be challenged by the modern market writer, of which Bengt Lidner is one of our very first representatives.[12] This difference in the writers' respective situation is reflected in other, no less conspicuous, differences. Lidner poses as a revolutionary sentimentalist who represents the voice of true, unmediated feeling; Oxenstierna preserves a polished, controlled diction and tends to avoid emotional immediacy. However, their poems also have something in common, as becomes apparent when studying the responses of the critics.

In his journal *The Swedish Parnassus* (*Svenska parnassen*) the critic and poet Gustaf Regnér dedicates a long review to "The year 1783". After giving a resume of the poem's content, he states: "The year 1783 contains that many great events, and our poet has tried to put as many subjects into his poem. Well, goodbye to old-fashioned unity…".[13] Regnér characterises the poem as a "concert, composed of various pieces, quite beautiful by themselves, while they do not accomplish much together."[14] As was the case with Lidner's poem, the absence of unity in Oxenstierna's *The Harvest* was commented on by critics. In a review for the *Stockholm Post*, Axel Gabriel Silfverstolpe points out that

> The nature of the subjects treated does not seem to allow for a well-ordered plan: the subjects are too many and too disparate, they do not truly have much in common. Only time and succession give them unity. In an epic or a dramatic poem, there is a thread to follow; in this poem, one must follow several, seemingly similar but not the same.[15]

If Lidner and Oxenstierna can be said to share this predicament in their deviation from the norms of unity, nothing couldbe more different than their respective attitudes to the problem. In his preface to "The Year 1783", Lidner had tried to pre-empt this kind of criticism. Due to the range of events contained in the subject (the American revolution, the secular reforms of Joseph II of Austria, Montgolfier's hot air balloon flight, the starvation in the Swedish countryside and so on) he confesses that he has been unable to observe "the laws of unity". He instead tries to shift attention to the poem's emotional qualities: "This is a *skaldestycke*, not an epic poem. […] What comforts is me that there are surely readers out there who will happily forget Horace and Despreaux [Boileau], when the heart gets to be tender and the eye turn wet."[16] He even twists a quote from Horace's *Ars poetica* to suit his purpose: "Denique sit quod vis, simplex duntaxat et unum" ("In the end it could be what you want, as long as it is simple and one."). In a more orthodox interpretation, it was understood as an exhortation to simplicity of plot and unity of tone.[17]

This preface has been treated by Anna Cullhed in her recent monograph on Lidner, where she views it as a way of shifting focus from narrative unity to the unity

found in the associations and emotions of the subject.[18] It is a valid point, but it needs to be qualified in order not to underestimate the journalistic qualities of Lidner's poem and his wrestles with a recalcitrant material. Lidner did not only seek to dramatize subjectivity, he also strove to describe the world news in the year 1783 by skipping between different events and continents. This encyclopedic ambition is something that he has in common with Oxenstierna's poems, as Martin Lamm once remarked.[19]

Rather than focusing on emotions and subjectivity, Oxenstierna tries to point to the unity in the matter in hand and affirm the logical connection between the poem's various parts and its main subject: Swedish agriculture. In a way, he confronts the same problem as Lidner did, but in a much more cautious and conservative manner. He struggles to be correct, while Lidner proudly takes on the role of innovator. Oxenstierna's worries come to the fore in a letter to the poet and critic Leopold where he asks for help with the preface to the poem:

> I wanted to give excuses for the length of my poem, and I cannot but find it unforgiveable. I wanted to offer a reason for the abundance of episodes, and I cannot find one. I wanted to point to their connection to the main subject, and they seem far-fetched. I wanted to show the rules I thought had governed me, and I cannot see any rules, just my own whims. I find support by no Art Poétique, from Aristotle to Boileau.[20]

It is worth noting how closely Oxenstierna's private attitude resembles Lidner's official one, but where the former strives to conform, the latter chooses to present himself as an original genius. In either case, the price to be paid is to "find support by no Art Poétique".

But while the critics comment upon the lack of unity, their reviews are not altogether unfavorable; quite the contrary. It is apparent that for both Regnér and Silfverstolpe, the strange structure of these poems also makes possible a different kind of reading experience. This compensatory logic is quite clearly expressed by Silfverstolpe:

> Thus, it is in poems of this kind, that transitions, comparisons and episodes are possible. And one is forced to admit, that if the connection between the parts might not bear closer scrutiny [...] the transitions are managed so well, that one is rather inclined to praise the want of system that made them necessary in the first place.[21]

In a similar way Regnér focuses on the twists and turns of Lidner's poem: "In a skillful way the Poet now moves his readers, or perhaps one should say his spectators, to Freedom and America. The passage is both short and comfortable."[22] The lack of unity thus comes with an important corollary: the qualities of the poem are to be sought for on another level. The transition (the *transitio* of ancient rhetoric) and the episode or digression (*egressus*) become important to the poem's structure, and focus is shifted to the poet's virtuosity in handling these traditionally less important devices. On

this level the similarities between Lidner's and Oxenstierna's poems are apparent. Beneath surface features such as style and poetic persona, these long poems share the same predicament: that of having to create at least the semblance of unity and continuity out of disparate materials. From this perspective, Lidner's subjectivity also takes on a slightly different meaning. It is not exclusively the kind of subjectivity valued by the romantics; it is also a rhetorical technique with a specific function in the structure of the poem.

What has been viewed as the subjective features of Lidner's poem rest primarily on his way of intruding upon the action, where the poet invites us to partake of his emotional response to the events portrayed. This attitude is framed by an extended simile in the beginning of the poem, which explains the poet's relation to his subject-matter. His muse's global wanderings are likened to the visual shock of a man born blind that miraculously has his sight restored, and is overwhelmed by impressions. This fiction allows the poet to marvel at the variety of the world, in what sometimes comes close to metapoetic commentary. Transitions between different themes are accompanied by outburst such as these:

> You flew like a dove to rest upon cypresses:
> How dare you, Muse! Take off into the eagle's regions?[23] (v. 549 –550)

These authorial intrusions often underline the contrast between the different sections of the poem at the same time as they ensure a connection between them (cf. v. 85 –86, 176 –77, 271 –72, 565 –66). This effect is often achieved through forms of aposiopesis, where the subject feigns being overwhelmed by what he sees. It is a rhetorical device that could be seen as typically lyrical, but it is after all not that foreign to the more formal and objective style of Oxenstierna. When in the final canto of *The Harvest* a wedding celebration is interrupted by soldiers returning from war, this is commented on in the following fashion:

> But in the joy of dancing, and the noise of games,
> Who interrupts my song with the tunes of war,
> Its banners and its shroud? Which unexpected guests
> Approach here, clad in armor, to take part of our feast?[24]

If we disregard the differing degrees of emotional charge, it is apparent that the function is very similar: to create a transition between two themes that in themselves lack a logical connection.

In both poems this patched-up kind of unity is intimately related to their preoccupation with the outside world in all its variety. We have seen how Lidner justified the lack of unity by pointing to the sheer amount of events that took place in 1783. A similar relation between the objects to be represented and the structure of the poem shines through in Oxenstierna's reflections. In the preface to the first, never published, version of *The Harvest* (1773), Oxenstierna tries to take the middle road between two demands: to achieve poetic unity, but also to steer clear of monotony. The

variations between different types of descriptions as well as shifts to a narrative mode are justified as ways of keeping the reader's attention from slackening. But he is forced immediately to add that

> I have sought to avoid all representation of things alien, and in the ones I have attempted, I have commanded them to unite in one object and agree with the main theme. [---] Thus (…) they become effects dependent on the main theme.[25]

When the poem in its second version of 1796 is expanded to a near epic format and in its encyclopedic scope points to the connections between agriculture, economy and trade, as well as their historical development, poetic unity becomes even harder to maintain and the transitions become more forced. This time, Oxenstierna is forced to justify even more deviations: "The stories as well as the moral teachings are always connected to the main design, either as derived there from or as leading us back there […] These episodes are no longer, in that sense, foreign matters."[26]

If these episodes do not, as in Lidner's poems, offer us a poetic subject overwhelmed, there is a similar bombardment of sense-impressions. The main theme, "The harvest", turns out to contain more subthemes than expected, and reaches out to zones that are a long way from the poem's locale—the Swedish countryside. For instance, in the fifth and sixth cantos the reader is moved abruptly from descriptions of harvesting activities to a mythological tale of the origins of navigation, and from there to a celebration of trade and a genre-piece depicting the life of a rich lord. This becomes possible through a series of transitions: the description of hemp leads to reflections on its use in the fabrication of ropes, which then gives way to the theme of navigation. When finally, in the genre-piece meant to illustrate the blessings of trade, the poem seems to stray a bit too far from the rustic simplicity elsewhere dominant, Oxenstierna is forced to create a transition back to the countryside. He manages this by likening his pastoral muse to a shepherdess that has lost her way into a palace and forsaken the true happiness of the countryside, and then admonishes her: "return to your meadow, your garden and your cottage."[27] The references to the native meadow and cottage set the scene for the next section, where useful imported products are distinguished from "unnatural" ones, i. e. luxury. This transition from the blessings of trade and the comforts of upper-class civilization, back to the rusticity of the countryside, was singled out for praise by Silfverstolpe in his review,[28] and we should perhaps ask why. It seems to be a matter of poetic skill as much as of the poem's grasp of reality. The transition joins together the themes "trade" and "the harvest of fruits and flowers", activities that are connected in reality but which require creativity to be brought together in a poetically convincing way. In both Lidner's and Oxenstierna's poems, the transition — whether managed by redirecting energy to the speaker of the poem, by metapoetic commentary or simply by association — allows a comprehensive view of the world while also standing in for what Regnér called "old-fashioned unity".

The Solution of Romanticism

The critical procedure of Regnér and Silfverstolpe implies reading the poems in terms of composition: they are described from beginning to end, and the reader is given resumes of the content along with explanations of the transitions between parts of the poem. One could argue that this implies an "epic" rather than a "lyric" reading. It is a reading practice that also seems highly tentative and provisional. At its point of departure lies an ideal of unity that these poems fail to achieve. As a form of compensation, they are valued for weaving together disparate parts as seamlessly as possible. There is, to some extent, a lack of agreement between the poetic practice and the critical toolkit of the reviewers. It would be tempting to deal with this discrepancy in terms of a "question" posed by the innovative works themselves that eventually will find its "answer" in the aesthetic doctrines of the romantics, and their new idea of poetic unity. To use an analogy from Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, we could say that ad-hoc-adjustments tend to proliferate when a scientific paradigm approaches a state of crisis.[29] But paradigms are also discontinuous: rather than solving problems within the older worldview, the terms of the question itself are reformulated. When we now turn to the reception of these poems by the romantics, the problem of unity is displaced onto another plane, where some problems seem to be solved while new ones are generated. By then the lyrical poem, rather than epic or tragedy, had become the model genre, and the unity sought for in vain on the level of composition is now found in the subjective unity of the author's creative imagination.

The first major response to the poems of Oxenstierna comes from Esaias Tegnér, whose position in Swedish letters is largely that of a bridge-builder between romantic and neo-classic ideals. The discourse was occasioned by his election in 1819 to the Swedish academy, where he succeeded Oxenstierna. Tegnér concurs with former critics that *The Harvest* is "constituted by discrete and as it were loose paintings. They are not connected by any action in the strong sense of the word."[30] From an Aristotelian point of view, the poem lacks unity, but somehow, Tegnér argues, Oxenstierna has managed to seal its cracks. However, "this unity is less real than it is seeming. In fact it is located, as it must be in poems of this kind, in the poet's feelings, in his perception and treatment of the theme — to put it simply, this unity is of the lyrical kind."[31] Through the choice of words such as "lyrical unity" and "idyllic mood",[32] Tegnér manages to adjust *The Harvest* to a new critical vocabulary, and acquit the poem of the accusation of wanting unity.

These points would later be taken up and expanded by the leading romantic author and critic P. D. A. Atterbom in *Svenska siare och skalder* (*Swedish Seers and Bards*, 1841 – 1855), the first modern book of Swedish literary history. He expands on Tegnér's points of view while also stressing the poem's patriotism: "This poem has its objective unity in this mostly idyllic-didactic but sometimes also idyllic-epic illustration of the Swedish mother country; its subjective unity is to be found in the poet's warm, lyrical feeling for nature and patriotism."[33] This, in the end, is what keeps the poem together: "Should one disregard the unity just mentioned, then the poem

will dissolve into a heap of discrete paintings without much connection between them."[34]

In the same volume, Atterbom describes Lidner's poem in a similar way. "The year 1783" is likened to "a bead necklace, where every bead by itself is beautiful, but not connected to the next one by more than the wire on which they are threaded."[35] Atterbom is careful to point out that the poem's success was not a result of the "mere excellence of certain parts" but of "the spell-binding unity of the poet's soul, which replaced the unity of theme and description."[36] It is not self-evident that these poems should be granted that kind of unity. While the academician Tegnér and the aged Atterbom sought to reconcile the traditional writers with new aesthetic theories, an earlier romantic critic, Lorenzo Hammarsköld, had refused to call Oxenstierna's poetry lyrical, and criticized the failed fusion of reflection and description in his nature poetry.[37]

If unity is saved by recourse to subjectivity, it is appropriate to ask what gets lost in the new kind of reading. One answer would concern the relation between form and ideology of the eighteenth-century poems, the way these poems' lack of epic unity reflect their view of the world. Lidner's and Oxenstierna's poems skipped metonymically from object to object in an effort to take in as much of the world as possible. Of course, much of what they chose to portray had by the romantic age ceased to be considered matter for poetry. The attempts by eighteenth century poets to write about scientific innovations and agricultural economy were often ridiculed by the romantics as a sign of their vulgarity and failure of aesthetic vision. But it is not just a question of what can be depicted, but also of its relation to the internal hierarchy of the poem. The young Atterbom's criticism of the academic style of writing perhaps best illustrates the divide between the neo-classical and the romantic aesthetic:

> A poem was understood as a piece, a bit of verse, a combination of verses, instead of these verses being viewed as a gradual development of the poem's idea. It seems one really believed that a poetic whole would be achieved by simply adding verse to verse and line to line until the fabricator of verses had no more to say on the subject.[38]

The mimetic ambitions of the eighteenth century poems are probably easiest to get at by isolating that in them which resists theorization by both neo-classicist poetics and romantic aesthetics. For what concerns the eighteenth century criticism, it is easy to see how the quest for a fuller representation collides with expectations derived from more traditional genres. The subjects chosen — the year 1783 or the Swedish agricultural economy — are hard to adjust to an epic idea of unity. The ambition to represent reality thus collides with an idea of mimesis based on a narrative model.[39] From the perspective of neo-classicism, the result is a failure of unity. If, however, this idea of unity is replaced with one modeled on the subjective lyric, the mimetic ambition all but disappears. The unformed raw material of the world would then not be empirical things to be portrayed in all their variety, but would be transformed into symbolism. While there are subjective features to the eighteenth-century long poems,

it is still, as we have seen, in the service of a description of empirical reality.

The tensions between unity and fragmentarity in the poems of Lidner and Oxenstierna areinteresting points where form and ideology go together, and they could become a starting-point for a more detailed interpretation than I have attempted in this paper. They testify to the constraints of poetics as well as these poems' appetite for the world in all its variety.

Notes

1. *Svenska akademiens handlingar ifrån år* 1796, vol. 2 (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1802), 58.
2. Ibid., 59: "Sättet af föreställningen, ordningen, omklädningen, tillhör Poëten sjelf att välja, likasom Skaldeslaget och Versarten."
3. Lennart Breitholtz, "Till den litterära terminologiens historia. Sammansättningar med ordet skald-." in *Studier i frihetstidens litteratur* (Uppsala: Svenska litteratursällskapet, 1956), 81.
4. Dominique Combe, "Le récit poétique et la poésie narrative: la question de l'épique" in Sylviane Coyault (ed.) *L'histoire et la géographie dans le récit poétique* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses univ. Blaise Pascal, 1997), 37–43. See also his *Poésie et récit* (Paris: J. Corti, 1989), 63–70.
5. Bernhard Fabian, "Das Lehrgedicht als Problem der Poetik" in H-R Jauss (ed.) *Die nicht mehr schönen Künste* (München: Fink, 1968), 68–89; Baxter Hathaway "Were Empedocles and Lucretius poets?", chapter 4 in Idem. *The Age of Criticism: the late Renaissance in Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell university press, 1962).
6. Representative examples of this line of reasoning can be found in Charles Batteux, *Cours de belles-lettres, ou principes de la littérature*, vol. III (Frankfurt: J. F. Bassompierre, 1755), 96. Abbé Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, *Réflexions critique sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (Dresden: George Conrad Walther, 1760) (1719), vol. I, 60f. For a swedish example, see J. W. Liljeståhle "Företal" in *Fidei-commis till min son Ingemund*, 2nd ed. (Stockholm: Anders Zetterberg, 1797), 5.
7. Richard Terry "Longer eighteenth century poems" in Michael O'Neill (ed.) *The Cambridge History of English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2010), 379.
8. Batteux (1755), 89.
9. Pehr Adam Wallmark ed. *Swenska språkets skönheter i vers och prosa eller Swensk antologi innehållande valda stycken i alla slag af Witterhet, indelade och ordnade efter de särskilta slagen, och hämtade ur våra äldre och yngre författare*, vol. I (Stockholm: Ecksteinska boktryckeriet, 1820), xxxii. The close connection between the form of the anthology and the way these poems are written has been pointed out by Staffan Björck in *Swenska språkets skönheter. Om den lyriska antologin i Sverige – dess historia och former* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1984), 57.
10. John Butt ed. *The Poems of Alexander Pope. A one-volume Edition of the Twickenham Text with selected Annotations* (London: Methuen, 1963), 153 (v. 288).
11. "Gustaf Wasa. Hjeltedikt uti sju Sånger" (review) in *Vitterhets Journal* 1777 (Stockholm: Pet. Hesselberg, 1777), 314: "en Skaldedikt kan innehålla sådana vackra ställen, och ändå vara rätt eländig; likasom man på et uselt Portrait kan finna et öga eller någon annan del, som har al erforderlig fullkomlighet. Det blifver derföre nödigt, at anse detta Poem i hela sit sammanhang, huru alla delar passa med hvarannan och med det hela, samt at til den ändan undersöka det efter alla konstens reglor."
12. For the notion of "ämbetsförfattare", see Bo Bennich-Björkman, *Författaren i ämbetet. Studier i funktion och organisation av författarämbeten vid svenska hovet och kansliet* 1550 – 1850 (Uppsala: Svenska bokförlaget, 1970).
13. Oxenstierna and Lidner figure as antithetical types of authors in Gunnar Sahlins sociological study of the period, *Författarrollens förändring och det litterära systemet* 1770 – 1795 (Stockholm:

Stockholms universitet förlag, 1989) 225.
14. "Året MDCCLXXXIII" (review) in Gustaf Regnér (ed.), *Svenska parnassen för år* 1784 (Stockholm: Anders Jac. Nordström, 1784) 335: "så många stora händelser innefattar året 1783 och lika så många ämnen des skald uti et qväde. Bort med den gammalmodiga enheten…".
15. A. G. Silfverstolpe, review in *Stockholms Posten* 15/7/1796 (N. o 158): "En fullkomligen sammankädjad plan för detta arbete, torde ej ämnenas natur medgifwa: de äro för många och särskilta, de äga ej någon werklig gemenskap med hwarandra: det är blott tiden och successionen, som göra dem till ett helt. [---] I ett episkt eller dramatiskt poeme finnes en tråd att följa: här måste man följa flera och sammanknyta hwar och en med en till tycket lika, men ej densamma."
16. Bengt Lidner, *Samlade skrifter*, vol. II (Stockholm: Svenska vitterhetssamfundet, 1937), 374: "detta är ett skaldestycke, ej något Poëme épique. […] min tröst är, att läsare gifvas, hvilka gerna förlåta Horatius och Despréaux, när hjertat kan ömma och ögat kanske fälla en tår."
17. Hugh Blair's remarks on the horatian tag are probably representative of the mainstream: "This is the Simplicity of plan in a tragedy, as distinguished from double plots and crowded incidents; the simplicity of the Iliad, or Aeneid, in opposition to the digressions of Lucan, and the scattered tales of Ariosto; […]. In this sense, Simplicity is the same with unity." Hugh Blair, *Lectures on rhetoric and belles-lettres* vol. II (Paris: Levrault frères, 1801) (1783), 30.
18. Anna Cullhed, *Hör mänsklighetens röst. Bengt Lidner och känslans språk* (Lund: ellerströms, 2011) 221.
19. Martin Lamm, "Lidnerstudier" in *Samlaren* 1909 (Stockholm: Svenska litteratursällskapet, 1910), 138.
20. Letter to Leopold 4/2 1795, in Gustaf Andersson (ed.), *Handlingar ur v. Brinkman'ska archivet*, vol. II (Örebro: Lindh, 1865), 452: "Jag ville ursäkta mitt arbetes längd ock finner den oförlåtelig. Jag ville ge skäl till mina Episoders myckenhet, ock finner inga skäl. Jag ville bevisa deras sammanhängande med hufvudämnet, ock finner dem hårdragna. Jag ville visa de reglor jag trodt mig följa, ock ser inga andra reglor än mina egna infall. Jag finner försvar af ingen Art Poétique, alt ifrån Aristoteles ända till Boileau."
21. Ibid.: "det är alltså i skaldestycken af detta slag, som egenteliga rummet är för transitioner, jemförelser och episoder: och man måste erkänna, at, wore ock sjelfva sammanhanget mellan ämnena här underkastadt någon anmärkning […] så äro likwäl transitionerne oftast så lycklige, att man skulle känna sig böjd att prisa den brist på system, som gjort dem nödwändiga."
22. Regnér (1784), 337: "Artigt flyttar nu Skalden sina läsare, eller rättare åskådare til Friheten och America. Öfverfarten är både kort och angenäm."
23. Lidner (1937), 374.: "En dufva nyss, du flög, att på cypresser hvila:/Hur djerfs du, skaldmö! Nu mot örnens rymder ila?". This reference to the line numbering, as well as the subsequent ones, follow this edition.
24. Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna *Arbeten*, vol. II (Stockholm: Carl Delén, 1806) 190:
25. "Men under dansens fröjd och lekens höga ljud,
Med krigets stämda spel, dess fanor och dess skrud,
Hvem bryter af min sång? Hvad oförtänkta gäster
I rustning nalkas hit att dela våra fester?"
26. Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna *Skördarne: skaldedikt i tre sånger* [1772 – 1773], Stockholm: Sällskapet bokvännerna, 1957) 35: "Jag har sökt undvika alla främmande föreställningar, och i dem jag vågat, budit till att förena dem i ett föremål och gjöra dem sammanstämmande i hufvudämnet. […] De blifva således (…) afhängige följder af hufvudämnet."
27. Oxenstierna (1806), preface (without pagination): "Så väl berättelserna som det moraliska förenas likväl alltid med hufvudämnet, antingen såsom härledde derifrån eller såsom förande dit tillbaka. Episoderna och dikten återkallas ständigt till våra bygder […] Dessa episoder upphöra i sådant afseende att vara främmande ämnen […]."

28. Ibid., 119
29. Silfverstolpe (1796).
30. Thomas S. Kuhn, *De vetenskapliga revolutionernas struktur* (Stockholm: Thales, 1992) 74.
31. Esaias Tegnér, "Inträdestal i Svenska Akademien 22 juni 1819." *Samlade skrifter*, vol. III, (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1992) 74: "i det hela sammansatt af skilda och liksom lösa taflor. Det är ingen egentlig handling som förbinder dem"
32. Ibid. "[…] denna enhet är mera skenbar än verklig. Den ligger, som den i Dikter af denna art måste, egentligen i Skaldens egna känsla, i hans uppfattande och behandling af ämnet, den är, med ett ord, lyrisk."
33. Ibid., 209.
34. P. D. A. Atterbom, *Svenska siare och skalder*, vol. III, (Uppsala: Lundequist, 1844) 654: "I detta, väl mestadels idylliskt-didaktiska, men emellanåt äfven idylliskt-episka förhärligande af det Svenska Fäderneslandet, har förevarande skaldeverk sin objectiva enhet; sin subjektiva har det i skaldens lyriskt varma natur-uppfattning och fosterlandskänsla"
35. Ibid.: "Bortser man från den nyss angifna enheten: då upplöser sig detta verk i en myckenhet särskilda och föröfrigt blott löst sammanhängande taflor."
36. Ibid, vol. V (Uppsala: Lundequist, 1849) 435: "[…] ett perlband, der hvar perla för sig är skön, men sammanhänger med de öfriga genom ingen annan enhet, än det gemensamma snörets."
37. Ibid., 437f: "ej blotta förträffligheten i vissa enskilda delar" […] "den enhet af trollkraft, hvarmed skaldens själ ersatte ämnets och målningens enhet."
38. Lorenzo Hammarsköld *Svenska vitterheten: historiskt-critiska anteckningar* (Stockholm: Z. Haeggström, 1833) 364.
39. P. D. A. Atterbom, "Den nya vitterhetsskolans betänkande om Svenska akademien och den goda smaken" in *Samlade skrifter i obunden stil* (Örebro: Lindh, 1866) 308: "Ett poem betraktades såsom ett stycke, en bit vers, en sammansättning af verser, i stället att dessa verser bort betraktas såsom en succesif utveckling af poemets idé: man tycktes verkligen tro, att ett poetiskt helt uppkommer derigenom att vers skrifves efter vers, rad under rad, till dess versmakaren ej har mer att säga om sitt ämne."
40. On the question of eighteenth-century transformations of mimesis, see among others Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf *Mimesis; Culture, Art, Society* (Berkeley: University of California press 1995) 155 – 163; John D. Boyd, *The Function of Mimesis and its Decline* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1968) 98 – 129. The Swedish discussion is treated in Mats Malm's *Textens auktoritet. De första svenska romanernas villkor* (Stockholm/Stehag: Symposion, 2001).

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On Great 19th Century Swedish Poets

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Abstract The most prominent poets in the two golden ages of Swedish poetry in the 19th Century are presented. Those are Esaias Tegnér (1782 – 1846) and Erik Johan Stagnelius (1793 – 1823) from the romantic era (1809 – 1830), characterized by dualism and an inward turn, enhancing the subject. Tegnér's poetic strength is his metaphors, combining dissonant linguistic areas. In "Spleen", the metaphors give a striking image of the suffering of depression. Stagnelius' poems are masterpieces. They mediate an extremely dualistic apprehension of life and reality: our life is but a misery of unfulfilled desire. But these desires are painted in such sensous colours, and formed in such enchanting verses, that the image of misery is overtaken by the artistic beauty. The second golden age, ca. 1889 – 1915, the national romantic era, is characterized by a farewell to the old, pre-industrial Sweden, and by a praise of literature's ability to effect joy and beauty. The finest poets of this era were Verner von Heidenstam (1859 – 1940), Gustaf Fröding (1860 – 1911) and Erik Axel Karlfeldt (1864 – 1931). Von Heidenstam is at his best in short, almost aphoristic poems. Here he formulates, in melodic verses, everlasting wisdom about man's earthly being, the dignity and marvel of man and the beauty of earth. Fröding is of a more melancholic temper, but his verses are often thought of as the epitome of traditional verse in Sweden. They are masterpieces, almost all of them, expressing in singing, rhythmic stanzas, the joy and the misery of man, very often the misery of the weak, the sensitive and suppressed. Karlfeldt, the last of the three masters, also creates poetry of formal excellence; his rhymes and rhythms are brilliant. His poems are complex, partly on account of his use of rare words, partly on account of his affinity with symbolism.
Key words Swedish poetry from the 19th century; Tegnér; Stagnelius; Heidenstam; Fröding; Karlfeldt

Swedish poetry is probably of world class. But since its qualities seldom — as with all poetry — can cross language boundaries, it is not very well-known beyond these. The music of the verses, the original and stunning metaphors in the stanzas, are bound to stay within the confines of the Swedish language. This essay however, is an attempt so mediate some of its charms, mainly focusing on five great Swedish poets from the 19th century — Esaias Tegnér, Erik Johan Stagnelius, Gustaf Fröding, Verner von Heidenstam and Erik Axel Karlfeldt. This quintet represents two of the golden ages in

Swedish poetry — the two first, Tegnér and Stagnelius, belongs to the so called romantic era (1809 – 1830), from the beginning of the century, the three mentioned thereafter, Fröding, Heidenstam and Karlfeldt belongs to the so called national romantic era, from the close of the century (ca. 1889 – 1915)

The first golden age, the Romantic era, is but a facet of the great Romantic movement in Europe, mainly stemming from the important Romantic movement in Germany, characterized by its philosophical turn, above all its enhancing of the qualities in the human mind, giving priority to the mind's ability to form the apprehension of the world. Simply put, the dichotomy subject-object, or mind-reality, was to a great extent thought of as either dominated by the subject construing this reality through language and imagination (German "Einbildungskraft"), or as a dialectic between this mind and the reality. Secondly, the world was thought of as twofold, dualistic: the ordinary, everyday world was a mere bleak reflection of a higher one — this was sometimes conceived of in religious terms, sometimes in more abstract, philosophical terms — the realm of the spirit. These ideas — combined with the breaking up from the ancient rules of poetry — gave an immense weight to the poet and his poems: these were thought of as stemming from a higher sphere, or giving insights into man's innermost, deepest life, or man's destiny. The poet was more or less equal to the prophet and the priest.

The breaking up from the ancient rules of poetry, meant that great creative energies was liberated, and in some cases — only a few, to be sure — this liberation produced splendid poems. Esaias Tegnér (1782 – 1846) is one of Sweden's great metaphor-makers; in his brilliant, luminous metaphors one can detect a truly imaginative talent, sometimes reminding one of Shakespeare's.

Tegnér was at first professor in Greek at Lund University, then (1824) he was appointed bishop in Växjö, both in the southern part of Sweden. He was gifted with a sharp intellect and witty, this sometimes bordering on maliciousness, but also endowed with a turbulent emotional life, resulting in the end in psychic disorder, on the verge on mental illness. Though he was an excellent teacher, a competent administrator and a very efficient bishop, he nevertheless once confessed "I really only lived when I sang" ["Egentligt levde jag blott då jag kvad"]. He wrote poems about the ecstasy felt when entering the poet's winged chariot, and he managed to convey something of the mightiness and the uncanniness of the empty space before time had entered our world in the poem "The Fire" ["Elden"] from 1805 (The spelling here and in all the quotations in Swedish has been modernized):

Eternity, like a snake in coils, laying brooding with black wings on worlds not yet begotten. The tent of space was not put up, for time had not begun to leap, and its watch was still. [1]	Evigheten, lik en orm i ringar, låg och ruvade med svarta vingar uppå världar, icke ännu till. Rymdens tält låg ouppspänt. För tiden var ej ännu någon stund förliden, och dess ur stod still. (Tegnér 13)

Tegnér's most famous poem, still read in Sweden today, is a poem about a deep depression, probably written around 1825, "Spleen" ["Mjältsjukan"]. All the things

Tegnér had hitherto enjoyed and cherished — poetry, memory, hope, reality itself — had suddenly become sullied, had withered, had been changed into something strange and almost literally depressing. In expressive and striking metaphors Tegnér manages to mediate the psychic pain that is depression, verging on suicide:

<table>
<tr><td>Then rose a dismal goblin, and the fellow
Set fast into my heart his sudden teeth –
And lo, that instant, all was bleak and hollow,
The sun and all the stars went out fortwith:
My happy view lay darkling, autumn-yellow,
Each stalk was bent, each thicket dull in death.
All vigor in my frozen senses died,
And courage withered there, and joy beside.</td><td>Då steg en mjältsjuk svartalf opp, och plötsligt
bet sig den svarte vid mitt hjärta fast:
och se, på en gång allt blev tomt och ödsligt,
och sol och stjärnor mörknade i hast:
mitt landskap, nyss så glatt, låg mörkt och höstligt,
var lund blev, var blomsterstängel brast.
All livskraft dog i mitt förfrusna sinne,
allt mod, all glädje vissnade därinne.</td></tr>
<tr><td>For me what message in that leaden, muddy
Reality, spread lifeless to my view?
How Hope was faded, ah, the apple-ruddy!
How Memory clouded, ah, the peacock-blue!
And Verse itself! Its tightrope-walking study,
Its somersaults, have palled upon me too –
They do not satisfy, these tricks and patter
Skimmed off the surface of impassive matter.
[---]
A vivid mark, by God's own finger written —
Why had I paid no heed to it before?
A stench goes through our life, of something rotten
That taints our spring and summer to the core.
That stench is of the grave, 'tis sure and ceratin,
The grave's walled up and marble guards the door,
But oh! corruption rots the living spirit,
Goes everywhere, the watch cannot secure it.</td><td>Vad vill mig verkligheten med sin döda,
sin stumma massa, tryckande och rå?
Hur hoppet bleknat, ack det rosenröda!
Hur minnet mulnat, ack det himmelsblå!
Och själva dikten! Dess lindansarmöda
dess luftsprång har jag sett mig mätt uppå.
Dess gyckelbilder tillfredsställa ingen
lösskummade från ytan utav tingen.

Ett läsligt märke av Guds finger skrivet
Vi gav jag förr ej på den skylten akt?
Det går en liklukt genom mänskolivet,
förgiftar vårens luft och sommarns prakt.
Den lukten är ur graven, det är givet:
grav muras till, och marmorn stalls på vakt.
Men ack, förruttnelse är livets anda,
stängs ej av vakt, är över allt tillhanda.</td></tr>
<tr><td>What of the night, thou watchman – nearly over?
How much is left? or will it have no end?
The moon, half-eaten, glides and glides forever,
The sad-eyed stars wend on and never wend;
My pulse ticks on with all its youthful fervor
But Anguish drives the swifter second-hand,
And draws each pulsebeat long with endless hurt —
O my consumed, my leeched and bloodless heart!
(Swedish Book Review 102)</td><td>Säg mig, du väktare, vad natten lider?
Tar det då aldrig något slut därpå?
Halvätne månen skrider jämt och skrider,
gråtögda stjärnor gå alltjämt och gå.
Min puls slår fort som i min ungdoms tider,
men plågans stunder hinner han ej slå.
Hur lång, hur ändlös är vart pulsslags smärta!
O mitt förtärda, mitt förblödda hjärta!
(Gustafsson Svensk dikt 281 – 282)</td></tr>
</table>

Tegnér's equal, nay, his superior as a poet, was the enigmatic Erik Johan Stagnelius (1793 – 1823). Son of a vicar, later bishop, he grew up on the small island in the Baltic, Öland, in a beautiful, idyllic landscape, now and then casting a shimmering glimpse on the dark images in his poems. In the beautiful poem "Necken" ["Näcken"] (probably from his last years) Stagnelius gives a picture of the spirit of the water, "Necken", placed in a serene setting, in a calm and beauteous evening, fragrant and glimmering. Though he sings the most beautiful songs, the "Necken" is condemned, is disowned by God, says the child, listening to his songs:

Golden clouds at eve are glancing;	Kvällens gullmoln fästet kransa
Elves upon the heath are dancing,	älvorna på ängen dansa,
And the leave-crowned Necken ever	och den bladbekrönta näcken
Rings his harps in the silver river.	gigan rör i silverbäcken.
Lo! a lad where trees are sighing,	Liten pilt bland strandens pilar
In the violet's vapor lying,	i violens ånga vilar,
Hears the sound the waters weave in	klangen hör från källans vatten,
Night, and calls through quiet even:	ropar i den stilla natten:
"Poor old minstrel, wherefore chanting?	"Arma gubbe! Varför spela?
Will not sorrows cease their haunting?	Kan det smärtorna fördela?
Though thou field and wood enliven	Fritt du skog och mark må liva,
Still by God thou art not forgiven.	skall Guds barn dock aldrig bliva!
Paradise's moonlit shadows,	Paradisets månskensnätter,
Eden's flower-crowned meadows	Edens blomsterkrönta slätter,
Angels high, whose light enfold them –	ljusets änglar i det höga –
Will thine eyes no more behold them?"	aldrig skådar dem ditt öga."
Tears the old man's face are laving;	Tårar gubbens anlet skölja,
Down he dives in the waters waving,	ned han dykar i sin bölja.
While his harp grows still and never	Gigan tystnar. Aldrig näcken
Sings again in the silver river.	spelar mer i silverbäcken.
(Peterson 83)	(Gustafsson *Svensk dikt* 327 – 328)

The music (the rhythm, the melody) of this poem is impossible to convey in a translation, likewise the exquisite metaphors and images. Though Stagnelius mastered the prosodic elements of the Swedish language, and managed to form these fine metaphors, he is never syntactically convoluted, his sentences are simple and clear.

He was an ardent student of theology and philosophy, and was extremely well read in the so called gnostic theology, a Christian heretic movement from c. AD 100 – 300. Here he found figures and narratives of a strange and colourful character that he used in his poems, likewise he there found an apprehension of the world that obviously fitted him: the romantic dualism was here sharpened to its extreme. Our daily life is but a life of misery, disappointments, trials and suffering, our task is to liberate us from the fetters of desire. The paradox is that no Swedish poet before or after Stagnelius has created such luminous, sensuous pictures of the temptations, beauties of this world, as he has. Even death, the annihilation, he depicts, in his most famous poem, "To Putrefaction" ["Till Förruttnelsen"], as a sensual experience, a sexual intercourse. In this poem he makes mastery use of the old Amor – Mors (Love – Death) motif, he expands the sensual aspects of the motif, by concentrating on the double meaning of the grave, it is both a couch and the last lair:

Putrefaction, hasten, Oh beloved bride,	Förruttnelse, hasta, o älskade brud,
to ready our lonely lover's couch!	att bädda vårt ensliga läger!
By the world rejected, by God set aside	Förskjuten av världen, förskjuten av Gud
thou art my only hope, I vouch.	blott dig till förhoppning jag äger
Quick! our chamber now adorn	Fort, smycka vår kammar

– on bier of somber decorations
the sighing lover to your dwelling shall go.
Quick! Prepare the bridal bed
– soon springtime's gift of new carnations
shall over her grow.

Caress in thy womb my body, which yearns!
In thine embraces smother my pain!
My thoughts and my feelings dissolve into worms,
of my burning heart let but ashes remain!
Rich art thou, o maid! – in dowry dost give
the vast, the verdurous earth to me.
Up here do I suffer, but happy shall live
down there with thee.

To stifling, enchanting realms of desire
black-velvet pages lead bridegroom and bride.
Our nuptial hymn chiming bells will attire
and curtains of green will both of us hide.
When out on the oceans tempests prevail,
when terrors will not bloodied earth release,
when battles are raging, in slumber we'll sail
in aureate peace.
(Gustafsson *Forays* 35)

– på svartklädda båren
den suckande älskarn din boning skall nå.
Fort, tillred vår brudsäng.
med nejlikor våren
skall henne beså.

Slut ömt i ditt sköte min smäktande kropp!
Förkväv i ditt famntag min smärta.
I maskar lös tanken och känslorna opp,
i aska mitt brinnande hjärta!
Rik är du, o flicka! – i hemgift du giver
den stora, den grönskande jorden åt mig.
Jag plågas häruppe, men lycklig jag bliver
därnere hos dig.

Till vällustens ljuva, förtrollande kvalm
oss svartklädda brudsvenner följa.
Vår bröllopssång ringes av klockornas malm
och gröna gardiner oss dölja.
När stormarna ute på världshavet råda,
när fasor den blodade jorden bebo,
när fejderna rasa, vi slumra dock båda
i gyllene ro.
(Gustafsson *Svensk dikt* 314 – 315)

Stagnelius died young, only 30 years of age, and we know little about his life and experiences, the things we think we know of him, are deduced from his poems. But though he lived isolated and poor, he was, after his death, immediately acknowledged as the great poet he was, and his poems were published 1824 – 26, by a friend of him, and with the help of his father. Now he is one of the greatest Swedish poets.

The years between this golden age and the next one, the national romantic era, of the years ca. 1889 – 1914, did not see such great poets as Tegnér and Stagnelius, though there were two, Viktor Rydberg (1828 – 1895) and Carl Snoilsky (1841 – 1903), both of whom wrote some very fine poems. Rydberg continued the romantic line, actually being the last of the Swedish Romantic poets; Snoilsky was an extremely skillful poet, mastering the difficult sonnet.

But the next generation of Swedish poets, of whom the three masters were Verner von Heidenstam (1859 – 1940), Gustaf Fröding (1860 – 1911) and Erik Axel Karlfeldt (1864 – 1931), was to form an incredible time of poetic prosperity. The common denominator of this generation was regionalism, bred by an acute awareness of the deep changes Sweden was experiencing when now, during the second half of the 19th century, entering the industrial era. This experience fostered a strong sense of something vanishing forever, namely the old Sweden, the strong cultural identities of different regions in the then mainly agricultural old society. The three poets developed different attitudes towards the rapid changes, but they all conveyed a strong sense for times gone by, for the traditions — artistic, historical or ethnic, i. e. the culture of the peasants. In Sweden the peasants were not to a small degree a compara-

tively powerful and important social class.

This generation also reacted towards the then reigning realism in literature — this generation sensed that beauty, fantasy and joy was part of literature's commission, its task not only being that of showing and discussing social problems and political issues, such as deep social injustices, women's slavery or lack of democracy. The most manifest anti-realist poet was von Heidenstam, a born aristocrat, who in 1889 published a pamphlet, "Renaissance" ["Renässans"], aiming at — as he saw it — realism's tediousness, its lack of beauty and joy. His finest poems are the shorter ones, mainly published in *New Poems* [*Nya dikter*] from 1915. Here von Heidenstam's talent for the aphoristic form and the wisdom of the aphorism is displayed, as in the following poem, about man, about humanness:

Marvel above all marvels,	Under över alla under,
High, unfathomable great marvel!	höga, outgrundligt stora!
The wolf's chasm was not your home,	Ulvens klyfta blev ej ditt hem,
Nor the dark sea's abyss.	ej det mörka havets djup.
You were born to wander	Född blev du att vandra
In the golden play of man	i den gyllene människoleken.
Brother, sister, thou who still	Broder, syster du som än
Walk your way on starry earth	går din färd på jordens stjärna,
Short is life's journey and night is falling,	kort är livets väg och kvällen snar,
Still, be content and filled with mirth!	blid och glatt förnöjsam ändå var.
Fight on the day of struggle, play on the day of rest!	Strid på stridens dag och lek på vilans!
[...]	
And when your white head sinks,	och när vitt ditt huvud sjunker,
Praise the marvel, that you were born	prisa undret, att du föddes
A human, godlike,	människogestaltad, gudalik,
Marvel above all marvels![2]	undret över alla under!

(Gustafsson *Svensk dikt* 465)

All the poets in this generation wrote poems about nature, about nature's gift to man: here man could find peace, beauty and comfort. In the poem "The Hour of Paradise" ["Paradisets timma"], von Heidenstam gives a picture of nature as it presents itself in the summer (which is very short in Sweden) and very early in the morning, when no one is awake — except the poet — this is the hour of paradise, the hour of earth's creation:

Oh, meadow! Let flower's chalices glimmer	Du äng, låt kalkar glimma
Around the fairy's light-winged heel!	kring älvans lätta häl!
Oh, hour of paradise!	Du paradisets timma,
Pour dew into our souls!	din dagg gjut i vår själ!
Still birds are singing and rejoicing	än jublar fågelsången
Around the sounds, bright at dawn	kring gryningsljusa sund
As clear as the first of days	så klar som första gången
When time began to leap.[3]	i tidens första stund.

(Gustafsson *Svensk dikt* 465)

Nature was also a dominant theme in Gustaf Fröding's poems — he is, together with

Stagnelius, probably the most skillful poet in the Swedish language, handling language's all aspects — its words, its prosody, its syntax — with an unequalled skill in the strict forms of traditional poetry. He was the son of a foundry proprietor, the foundry and the country estate situated in the western part of Sweden, in a beautiful province, filled with lakes, mountains, rivers and forests. In the poem "A lovely day" ["Vackert väder"], published in his first collection of poems, *Guitar and Accordion* [*Guitarr och dragharmonika*] from 1891, this nature forms the background to the story in the poem, a story about an unsuccessful courting:

A clear sky above the lake,	Klar låg himlen över viken,
all basks in summer's heat,	solen stekte hett,
and Haga's farm bell calling out	och vid Haga ringde Hagas
at one o' clock its strident beat.	gälla vällingklocka ett.
The church at Brunnskog stood there bright,	Brunnskogs kyrka stod och lyste
a farmer's bride, so fresh and white.	Som en bondbrud, grann och ny.
Above the birches on the Berga height	över björkarne vid Berga
much like the hat-veil on a lovely lady	som ett hattflor på en herrgårdsfröken
a cloud was floating light.	svävade en sky.
[……]	[……]
Like long-ships fully dressed there swam	och som högtidsklädda långskepp
Lake Vermeln' s holms in turn	summo Värmelns holmar fram,
the spruce' s song across the prow,	över stäven susa granar,
across the thwart the alder's sough,	alar susa over toft
and pine-trees' sighs across the stern.	tallar över akterstam.
(Fröding *The Selected Poems* 25 – 26)	(Fröding *Samlade dikter* 114 – 115)

Gustaf Fröding' s mother, Emilia, was a very gifted woman, and her son obviously inherited her talent for writing verses. But from her and also from his father, Fröding also inherited a melancholy temper, which led to periods of depression, even psychic disorder. The times, the second half of the 19th century, were hard on his family, the economy of the estate and the foundry was constantly worsening, partly on account on an economic depression, partly on account of the father's inability to handle the economic crisis. So Fröding experienced himself, his family and his class as remnants from times past. In the poem "A gazelle" ["En ghasel"] (also from the first collection) Fröding expresses his sense of being outside a normal life, the ordinary way of life — this feeling he formed in the very rigid stanza of the Persian gazelle, where one word or one phrase is repeated in the end of each verse:

I am looking at the world out through the bars,	Jag står och ser på världen genom gallret;
I can' t, I do not want to leave the bars,	jag kan, jag vill ej slita mig från gallret,
it is so good to see how life goes round,	det är så skönt att se, hur livet sjuder
see its waves come surging 'gainst the bars,	och kastar höga böljor upp mot gallret,
so madly gay and tempting is the sound	så smärtsamt glatt och lockande det ljuder,
when laughs and song come floating through the bars.	när skratt och sånger komma genom gallret.
[---]	
There is a crowd of boats and happy steamers,	Det vimlar båtar där och ångare
and brassy music and romantic dreamers.	med hornmusik och muntra sångare
Yes, lots of happy people stroll out there,	och glada människor i tusental,

and talk and breathe the lovely morning air. I must get out, I must, I want to play a drink of life, if only for a day – don't let me suffocate behind the bars!	som draga ut till fest i berg och dal; jag vill, jag vill, jag skall, jag måste ut och dricka liv, om blott för en minut, jag vill ej långsamt kvävas bakom gallret!
In vain, in vain the hateful bars I shake, the unforgiving, steely hard old bars. They will not stretch, they will not give or break, for there, inside myself, the bars are wrought, and only when I break, the bars will break. (Fröding *The Selected Poems* 32 – 33)	Förgäves skall jag böja, skall jag rista det gamla, obevekligt hårda gallret - det vill ej tänja sig, det vill ej brista, ty i mig själv är smitt och nitat gallret, och först när själv jag krossas, krossas gallret. (Gustafsson *Svensk dikt* 478)

Fröding always had an eye for the weak and gentle, people that are very sensitive and easily hurt, people that are exploited by the mighty – he wrote poems about poor, suppressed people, about men being sweated in the foundry, about young women being victims to prejudice and envy – in the poem, "Sigh, sigh, willows!" ["Säv, säv, susa!"] in *New Poems* [*Nya dikter*] from 1894, about a young girl that drowned herself, probably on account of her giving birth to a so called illegitimate child, fruit of a forbidden love, he expresses his pity for her fate in beautiful, melodic stanzas, formed after a mediaeval poem, where the melodic and laconic expressions reign:

Sing, willows, sing, the billows are rolling, tell me where Inga young maiden is strolling!	Säv, säv, susa, våg, våg, slå, I sägen mig var Ingalill den unga månde gå?
She cried like a wingbroken bird, when she sank in the lake. It was when spring was about to awake.	Hon skrek som en vingskjuten and, när hon sjönk i sjön. Det var när sista vår stod grön.
They bore her grudge at Vesterbylid. She had a great sorrow indeed.	De voro henne gramse vid östanålid det tog hon sig så illa vid.
They bore her a grudge for land and for gold, they hated her love, it was young and bold.	De voro henne gramse för gods och gull och för hennes unga kärleks skull.
They prickled an eyeball with thorn, they stained a lily's dew with scorn.	De stucko en ögonsten med tag, de kastade smuts i en liljas dagg.
So sing, yes sing your sad song, your rippling little billows, Sing, billows, sing, Sigh, sigh, willows! (Fröding *The Selected Poems* 45 – 46)	Så sjungen, sjungen sorgsång, I sorgsna vågor små, säv, säv, susa, våg, våg, slå! (Gustafsson *Svensk dikt* 484)

The last poet of the three masters, Erik Axel Karlfeldt, also came from the rural parts of Sweden, from the famous province of Dalecarlia, characterized by a very strong and colourful cultural tradition of the peasants. The feudal system never came to this part of Sweden, hence there are no aristocratic families or estates in this province

(and the regions north of it). But Karlfeldt, stemming from these strong-willed and self-confident Dalecarlian peasants, also conceived of himself, like Fröding, as a stranger in life, an outcast even. This was due to his father once being sentenced for embezzlement, and on account of this, being forced to abandon his estate. The young Karlfeldt experienced this as, which it de facto was, a social catastrophe, and also affecting him, not only economically. But as a poet he took revenge, and ended up as not only a member of the Swedish Academy, but also as its influential Secretary. His poems are, as are von Heidenstam's and Fröding's, extremely formally skillful, and also, on account of his frequent use of old Swedish words, words from the old culture of the Dalecarlian peasants, very difficult to translate. His great themes are love and death, steeped in old forms and in the old language. His rhymes are probably the most intricate in the traditional Swedish poetry, his sense of the rhythm is equal to Fröding's, and his metaphors equal those of Tegnér's.

He was the youngest of the three, and while Fröding died already in 1911, and von Heidenstam published his last work already in 1915, Karlfeldt continued to publish during the years after the Great War (1914 – 18). His last collection of poems, *The Horn of Autumn* [*Hösthorn*] from 1927, contains his most loved poem, still read, truly a masterpiece, called "The Winter Organ" ["Vinterorgel"]. It is a long poem, and on the surface it depicts the winter entering our world. Karlfeldt tells this story in the form of a great metaphor, namely the winter is building an organ, and the landscape, the forests are transferred into a huge, mighty organ. The poem begins with a vision of autumn, when everything is dark and threatening, and here Karlfeldt conceives of autumn's landscape as a temple, whose vaults are dark and low, and he addresses this autumn in form of an apostrophe to the first of November, a day always called All Saint's Day [Allhelgonadagen], the day of death and darkness:

Your temple is dark and your vault is low,	Ditt tempel är mörkt och lågt är dess valv,
Day of All Saints!	Allhelgonadag!
There summer's hymn dies down as a tremble	Där slocknar sommarens hymn som ett skalv
Of tolling bells.	av klämtande slag.
And her mantle tears the blackened sky,	Sin mantel river den svarta sky,
And pallied rags of the groves flies away	och lundarnas bleknade trasor fly,
And night chants of all that is dead	och natten mässar om allt som är dött,
All flesh, all hay![4] allt hö, allt kött.	(Gustafsson *Svensk dikt* 526)

Here Karlfeldt is close to symbolism, that European tradition that develops the idea of the symbol — stemming from the Romantic movement — especially symbols from nature. The symbol is, due to this tradition, able to express a multitude of meanings, the symbol can assemble different aspects of a hidden truth, impossible to express in ordinary words — only the symbol can accomplish this. The symbol in this poem is of course the organ, built by the winter, and played by a great organ-player, an enigmatic figure in the poem, an artist, a musician, once producing a wonderful tone from the stars above:

Once in a while when dawn is watching	det susar ibland intill gryningens väkt,

a whistling from star's breath can be heard,	som stjärnornas lugna andedräkt,
one tone alone, one clear as glass	en enda ton, en glasigt klar,
a wonderful one.[5]	och underbar. (Gustafsson *Svensk dikt* 528)

This poem and this collection of poems from 1927, forms the end of this golden age in Swedish poetry — and also, one can say, the end of traditional, metric poetry. This age, and also its predecessor, the Romantic age, has given to the Swedish culture a heritage worth preserving, and for certain, the quality of these two golden ages, has played an important role since, setting standards for generations to come. In a dialectical manner, these two golden ages also have given the modernist poets a high standard to revolt against, hence inciting them to surpass the great masters. Thus, the Swedish Modernist lyric is, possibly and partly due to this contest between generations, also of a very high quality. Last, but not least, these masters rendered the poet 's task and figure a very prestigious position in Swedish culture.

Notes

1 – 5. These are the author's translations.

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The Caterpillar Transforming into A Butterfly: The Images of Women in Strindberg's *Zones of the Spirit*

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Abstract In this article I will investigate Strindberg's images of Women in *Zones of the Spirit* ("En blå bok"). I have found Strindberg's judgment of women's character to be associated with a concept of transformation. Strindberg's thoughts about the transformation process are connected to transmutation in alchemy, i. e. how matter is transmuted through different stages of purification into perfect gold. It is also connected to Christian notions of conversion, made manifest in the description of the stages of the meditation process. In describing women, Strindberg often uses conceptions of the initial stadium of the transformation process, i. e. when the alchemist's material is in lack of form, light and purity. She is compared to formless matter, which needs to be transformed by the potent power of the male to achieve meaningful life. The elements of water and earth are said to be her medium and when Strindberg is contemplating whether she will ever turn into an immortal soul he relates to the process of the caterpillar evolving into the beautiful butterfly. To Strindberg, the most comforting of the answers to his questions about female character is that she is a medium of man's reconciliation with God.
Key words *Zones of the Spirit*; Strindberg; images of women; transformation; alchemy

What I mean to show in this essay is the way Strindberg depicts women in *Zones of the Spirit* according to the transformation process in alchemy and to the mediation process. The examples I investigate will be examples of how women are sometimes described according to the initial part of the process, which in alchemy is a very unpleasant one, and sometimes according to the final wonderful stage of the process. She is also compared to the actual force bringing about the transformation and it is this picture of her that seems most appreciated by the author.

Before describing Strindberg's images of women in *Zones of the Spirit*, I will however shortly introduce Strindberg's literary work *Zones of the Spirit* ("A blue book", "En blå bok"). It was published in four volumes from 1907 until 1912, which is during the very last years of Strindberg's life. *Zones of the Spirit* contains 650 short essays that in the commentary on his literary production have often been de-

scribed as meditations and as religious discourses.[1] The word *essay* is however the most often used term. Still, they may be regarded as meditations since they look a lot like the devotional literature Strindberg studied intensively at that time. Strindberg namely wanted them to contain a "devotional word for each day of the year".

One gains an idea of the great variety of subjects *Zones of the Spirit* covers when studying the headings in the index of the essays. The headings are as follows: "Philosophy equals knowledge of mankind", "Psychology equals problems of love", "Religion", "Art and Aesthetics", "Literature", "History", "Philology", "Mathematics", "Botany", "Zoology", "Astronomy", "Metrology", "Chemistry", "Physics", "Medicine", "Geology", "Mineralogy" and "Occultism".[2] Strindberg deals with such different subjects as the meaning of cuneiform, the distances to the stars, the difficult character of women and the question of how to understand the suffering of Christ.

Of the headings I have mentioned, it is apparent that a large part of *Zones of the Spirit* contains Strindberg's speculations on different scientific subjects. But above all, the work is characterized by Strindberg's religious message. In the essay entitled "History of the Blue Book",[3] he explains how the reader should perceive the author of *Zones of the Spirit* — he tells the story of a person who has managed to leave the ungodly, "the black banners", and become one of the people who have found salvation in God.

To understand Strindberg's description of women in *Zones of the Spirit* it's necessary to recognize the general pattern of thought in the work. It has to do with Strindberg's notion that everything is undergoing transformation, a process characterized by different stages. Those are associated with the concept of transmutation in alchemy. An increasing level of purity characterizes the different stages in the alchemistic process of transmuting matter into gold. It is also important that an increasing level of heat is required to purify the initially raw matter in the alchemist's crucible. In *Zones of the Spirit*, Strindberg describes nature as well as human life in terms of these different stages. Like the alchemists, he considers the highest stage, the fully accomplished transformation, to be the result of an unknown and inexplicable force. The word *transmutation*, which above all was an expression the alchemists used to name the process of transformation, is a frequent term in the scientific essays of *Zones of the Spirit*.

It is also illuminating to associate Strindberg's concepts of transformation with the Christian notion of conversion, made manifest in the description of the stages of the meditation process that may lead to the inner transfiguration of man. Even such a process is characterized by a certain order. I use the word "transformation" to explain how Strindberg perceived that people change in relation to one other and to God, and for his apprehension of how different stages of development in nature and in matter can be explained. He deals above all with the process of how life begins and evolves and associates the Christian notion of resurrection with the alchemistic process that describes how dead matter comes to life.[4]

In the following example I will show how Strindberg is associating woman with a force of love that he equals with the transforming power in alchemy and that he also

uses pictures of stages in the meditation process to describe this. The correspondence between inner and exterior transformation I thereby pointed out. I start with an example from the essay "Fractions" in *Zones of the Spirit* ("Fraktioneringar", which is a chemical term that Strindberg slightly adjusted, is used for the different chemical substances that evaporate during a distillation process).[5] Chemical substances are here shown to change in different transitional stages depending on the degree of added heat. Simultaneously, Strindberg is describing the effect of love in his recounting about somebody who has the ability to increase the degree of warmth and energy in the relationship:

> The human personality can be compared to mother lye, which during distillation gives different preparations, as I at different temperatures interrupt the operation. At the lowest temperature I get but gases and water, distilling stone carbon tar; then comes pungent ammonia [...] finally comes aniline, which is the sweet perfume of the almond tree; and the aniline is related to the light [...]. I 'm but tar but you can warm me, and I' ll be what you make of me! [...] there is only one that transforms me to almond tree, but that person will be able to se all the colours there are and even more. [...]
>
> Now the one that got only ammonia asks, is it possible to harvest figs on thistles? Yes, it's possible to get herring brine out of hyacinth and roses out of corpses. But one has to know how to go about it, and temperature is required!

As the highest temperature is reached, the sweet perfume of aniline appears. The stinking odours that came forth in the beginning of the process are now gone. The evaporating substances become cleaner and cleaner and spread increasingly sweeter smells. The final stage is the perfume of the "almond tree". Since the almond tree is a biblical symbol of paradise,[6] transformation of a person into an almond tree was probably intended by Strindberg to denote a much-loved person. Accordingly, a person who, just as aniline is said to "be related to light", is regarded as the most wonderful company you can expect. That is to say, she has a transforming capability. The ability of communicating is thus described in terms of a transformational capacity. Skilfulness in this regard is also described as a capacity to infuse life.[7] Like the alchemists, Strindberg associated transformation with a life giving ability. The transforming power of love is expressed as an analogy to a chemical distillation process. Strindberg is thus describing the purification of matter and the human soul. Heat, the appropriate temperature, becomes an illustration of the purifying and transforming power of love.

As Strindberg uses the symbolism of the almond tree, he is alluding to the passage in the Book of Jeremiah in the Bible where the prophet Jeremiah receives his devotional call via the image of an almond tree.[8] As God calls to him, he sees the vision of a branch of an almond tree. His vision can be seen as an expression of the experience of divine presence. Contemplation, that is to say, the last stage in the meditation process, has figuratively been compared to a flower on a branch.[9] As the flowers of the almond tree blossom on a naked branch, Strindberg's almond tree may be associ-

ated with the transforming pattern in the meditational process.

Strindberg used the almond tree to describe a desirable condition. Another expression he also used in the cited passage, and with a similar meaning, was seeing "all the colours there are". Even that phrase can be associated with the aim of the meditation process: in meditation, you first focus on one thing at a time, but in the final phase, i. e. contemplation, everything merges into one picture.[10] After having meditated on one colour at a time, suddenly one becomes aware of all the colours of the spectrum. In alchemy there is a similar understanding. In the alchemical process the spectrum's all colours are revealed just as the final transformation is about to happen.[11] By using the image of the almond tree and the expression "see all the colours there are" to describe a completed transformation process, Strindberg exploits images from alchemy that also can be associated with the last phase of the meditation process in his description of the love of a woman.

If this was quite a favourable picture of the love of woman, where one can see an estimated picture of her, I will now turn to the depiction of women in *Zones of the Spirit* where Strindberg in his aim to describe women exploits phenomena that comes about in the initiation of the alchemistic transformation process, that is when obstacles occur which make the transformation difficult, and sometimes even impossible, to pursue. As he often associates woman with matter, she is then described as lacking such qualities as light, spirit, fire, purity, transparency and self-awareness. The relationship between man and woman in *Zones of the Spirit* is then characterized by an alchemistic related thought, which is that the element of man is the forming spirit and that of woman, the dissolving matter.[12] However, as we have seen in the former example, women can be depicted with qualities that relate to transformation and reconciliation and with life-giving virtues.

In "Caterpillars or temporary materializations",[13] Strindberg compares a woman's destiny with the life of a larva. The larva is associated with the lack of form and with a change process that invites obstruction, a process that do not want to set off. The obstructions for the woman, characterized as a larva, may, for example, consist of worldly temptations that make it impossible to control her life.

> I knew a woman, who was a complete vacuum, and therefore constantly needed company in order to galvanize into something that resembled life. [⋯]
>
> As she was filled with a notable man, she went out to socialize and dazzled with the borrowed light [⋯]
>
> But as she was forced to be at home alone, she collapsed as an empty sack, got ill, got tired of life, suicidal. As a larva she was a night animal, slept during day and woke up only as the sun went down and the chandelier of the cafés were lit.[14]

Describing the woman as a larva Strindberg is saying something about what he sees as her fundamental character, or rather of her emptiness and her lack of character. He explains the notion of larva to which he is referring: "The theosophists mean by caterpillars [or larvae] the souls of dead men who take possession of people who by nature

are empty and in lack of a self".[15] The author also mentions that in "Faust" Goethe lets caterpillars take possession of the main character and live a faked life in that person's body. A character described as a larva is thus an empty person, lacking a "self" — someone who has never been awake and who lacks the possibility of waking up. The larva, it seems, lacks all the qualities that would make a transformation possible, though it is exactly what it is yearning for, namely another life, "above the earth, in light of the day":

> It was the expectation of the larva to be able to fly; and its lack of the joy of life was due to the unreasonable thought that a temporary materialization would be able to live eternal life. She knew death as an end of everything, though death is a beginning.[16]

The caterpillar, which constitutes but a "temporary materialization" (as evidenced by the title of the essay, "Caterpillar and Temporary Materializations") lacks qualities for a continued existence, i. e. eternal life, a life after death; its life is characterized by a vain longing for a better life. It has no transforming power making the transformation process possible. Strindberg is also telling that this is due to here leading a fast life.

According to Strindberg the unblessed larva woman, as a result of her lack of form and self-awareness, can be dangerous to other people:

> She was naturally ungodly, but had moments, when she felt unblessed, cursed and sighing for redemption, whereby
>
> she meant death, the transformation into a chrysalis and into a butterfly. [...]
>
> But this unfixed combination of elements in fluctuating stages, had the ability to transmute her uncompleted person, and her self was so unfixed in its chemical combinations, that it like the latent heat might be dissociated in a certain moment, irradiate, go out in space, attack from a distance.[17]

The unfixed stage she is associated with is therefore not only a torment to her but is also dangerous to the people surrounding her. Her unpleasant attacks are explained by transformations, but her weak character makes the process get out of hand. That which is already fluctuating and unstable "transmutes", changes, transforms and distorts itself in an uncontrollable manner. The larva woman will find neither happiness nor joy, since in her condition the divine light cannot but cause pain and torment:

> But she was hunting for happiness, seeking and seeking, but not on the right places; since love cannot be found among the ungodly. If only the divine in man was allowed to lighten up the matter it would glow and warm in a supernatural way; and that which is loss of strength for a person of a lesser mind, becomes a profit for the person of a purified mind; he perceives himself as giving away, but he is gaining infinitely, and he wanders all day in a blissful yearning for the sun

> to come down and for the virtuous darkness of the night or the blue night lamp of the moon. And that mystery, it doesn't endure the strong day light, not even the light of the lamp at the studying place; yes, that's the way it is![18]

In the above quotation, Strindberg changes, without any further comment, from writing "she", (the unblessed woman), to writing "he" as his thoughts change into a more general discussion about how the man of clean spirit is renewed by the divine light. This light is now seen to bother people with less purified spirits, like the larva woman. For those who have light and purity inside, darkness, and even death, is not a threat. *He* feels the strength that may transform and knows that to him death is not an end. That is why he is even able to long for "the virtuous darkness of night". How it is happening, how or why the divine light during the proper circumstances may warm and transform a person, however, is a mystery that cannot be explained. "Yearning for the sun to come down", "the darkness of the night" and "the blue night lamp of the moon" imply an expectation of meeting God, a meeting which signifies a transformed life — a transformation which may also have implied a transition from worldly life to eternal life. If you cannot admit the divine light into your soul, you cannot grasp that mystery; neither can you understand the longing for God. Reason is not sufficient — "not even the light of the lamp at the studying place" is enough.

The man with a clear conscience, however, may, unlike the larva woman, feel the light inside him even as the lights are put out. He — it has to be a "he" — still has the light inside after that "the chandeliers of the cafés" are put out and he may with confidence wait for the sun to set and "the virtuous darkness of the night or the blue night lamp of the moon". This is because he has the light of God inside him.

If the divine could warm up the larva, a transformation might occur. But the ungodly larva woman will never experience that mystery. Her destiny is to wander about "seeking, mourning, and asking for answers, without finding any".[19] She is trapped in a condition characterized by questions without any answers.

The larva woman is afraid of the dark. She cannot understand that death is not an end, but a beginning. Her desperate yearning for light and for life will never be rewarded. She does not dare to leave the larva stage and move on to the transformation stage, to the chrysalis that lives above earth and will transform into butterfly. The woman at the larva stage cannot generate light from God, the kind of light that transforms. The only light she might absorb is the momentary, faint and insufficient radiation from a man. The light he lets her "borrow" is thus described as a parallel of man's dependence on the light of God.

Will Strindberg give the woman, described as a caterpillar, a possibility to evolve towards the pupation and change into a butterfly? The pupation illustrates the stage to which the larva woman must progress. She would then be able to withdraw, thereby affording a solution to her problem. If she only were to withdraw from her frivolous social life and from the "borrowed" light, her life would be given form and shape. As long as she lives the life of the larva she is condemned, but the stage of the chrysalis would offer a possibility of transformation.

The author uses the old transformation motif as an image of reconciliation with life. If the larva were to become a butterfly it would leave the life of the material worldand enjoy eternal life. The woman, who has neither a real nor an enduring existence, does not qualify for eternity. The life of the larva woman illustrates insurmountable obstacles, apparently indicating that something perishable cannot transform into something eternal. She is in lack of light, of form and of a self; she is, in other words, an immortal soul. The butterfly represents the soul that in an inexplicable way — through a transformation — would catch a form out of the disordered matter of the larva and the chrysalis. But someone who lacks the ability to receive the light of the divine will probably never be able to fly.

This last picture of the woman in *Zones of the Spirit* can be said to contain a very unfavourable view of woman and it's associates with the kind of obstacles that occur in the beginning of the alchemistic transformation process. The caterpillar transforming into a butterfly is a well-known description of the transformation process. Accordingly, in Strindberg's negative view of women, he equals her with the larva or the caterpillar that cannot transform, cannot go on the further stages in the process.

Conclusion

So what I have shown here is that there are pictures of a favourable and a loving kind of woman and those much less so in*Zones of the Spirit*. However, in both cases Strindberg uses the transformation process in alchemy to describe either or. And it is not difficult to imagine that he has had different women in mind describing them so differently. In the last picture it's not difficult to see that he's thinking of someone who he want to learn more goodly manners. In the former text I would say he's thinking about someone he still loves.

In describing different women and women in general in*Zones of the Spirit*, Strindberg also uses other images, including the Sleepwalker, the Spirit of Earth and The Hyacinth. The different images have features in common which can be explained by the alchemistic pattern of thought Strindberg uses in describing the character of woman. So if I was to conclude which picture, the favourable one or the unfavourable, is dominating in *Zones of the Spirit*, I would argue that Strindberg in this work is rather a misogynist. The Sleepwalker, The Spirit of the Earth, The Hyacinth are all pictures that is pointing out her inability to change, or using a more appropriate word, to transform.

Notes

1. See Gunnar Ollén, "Commentary Part" in *En blå bok I*. (Stockholm, 1997) 444.
2. August Strindberg. *En blå bok III-IV*. (Stockholm, 2000) 1723.
3. Strindberg. *En blå bok I*. (Stockholm, 1997) 429.
4. For further information about *Zones of the Spirit* and it's general pattern of thought — see Astrid Regnell, "Seeing Stars in Broad Daylight, Transformation and Reconciliation." *Zones of the Spiri*t. Ed. August Strindberg. (Lund, 2009). It has got a summary in English.
5. Strindberg. *En blå bok II*. (Stockholm, 1999) 943.

6. See Mona Sandqvist, "Inferno som alkemistroman" in *Strindbergiana*. (Stockhom, 1995) 162.
7. Boel Westin. *Strindberg, sagan och skriften.* (Stockholm/Stehag, 1998) 164.
8. See Gunnar Ollén, "Commentary Part" in *En blå bok II* (Stockholm, 1999) 1198.
9. Louis L. Martz. *The Poetry of Meditation.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954) 17.
10. Ibid.
11. Lyndy Abraham. *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery.* (Cambridge University Press, 1998) 45.
12. Lyndy Abraham. *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery.* (Cambridge University Press, 1998) 194.
13. Strindberg. *En blå bok II.* (Stockholm, 1999) 988 – 993.
14. Strindberg. *En blå bok II.* (Stockholm, 1999) 988.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Strindberg. *En blå bok II.* (Stockholm, 1999) 991.
18. Strindberg. *En blå bok II.* (Stockholm, 1999) 992.
19. Ibid.

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Astrid Lindgren's Twin Roles

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Abstract In the history of Swedish literature, 1945 is usually regarded as a milestone: Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* was published, revolutionising not only children's literature but the attitude towards children and their upbringing. "The modern Swedish children's book" was born. The period after the Second World War is known as "the golden age" of children's literature since several of the great authors of children's books and literature for young adolescents made their debuts and continued to write for many years. The publishing house of Rabén & Sjögren at that time was a relative newcomer to the publishing business. The following years were a great success; Astrid Lindgren was the company's most notable author. A major factor in the establishment of its reputation was the double role of Astrid Lindgren, who was not only its most important author but also the editor of children's books. She was one of the first Swedish authors to demand that the quality of books for children be the same as that of those for adults. As author and publisher, Astrid Lindgren devoted her life to making children's books good reading.
Key words Astrid Lindgren; Pippi Longstockning; Rabén & Sjögren; publishing

In the history of Swedish literature 1945 is usually regarded as a milestone. "The modern Swedish children's book" was born and Astrid Lindgren's book Pippi Långstrump (Pippi Longstocking) was published and revolutionised both children's literature and the attitude to children and their upbringing. The period after the Second World War is known as "the golden age" of children's literature since several of the great authors of children's and youth literature made their debuts and continued to write for many years. A relatively stable group comprising Astrid Lindgren, Lennart Hellsing and Tove Jansson, provided the solid base and they and many of their most notable colleagues were printed by the publishing house of Rabén & Sjögren. The house was, at that time, a relative newcomer to publishing. The business started in 1942 and very quickly established a profile as a publisher of quality books for children and young people. Certainly, a major factor in the establishment of the company's reputation was the double role of Astrid Lindgren as she was not only the editor of children's books but also the most important author for that company.

1. Author and Editor

Astrid Lindgren worked as editor-in-chief for Rabén & Sjögren from 1946 to 1970 and for almost a quarter of a century was responsible for children's literature. When Astrid

Lindgren was appointed she was already well known as an author; her first Pippi Longstocking book was published in 1945. She was also a qualified secretary and was regarded as extremely suitable to assist the company manager Hans Rabén. The company believed that it was an opportune time to invest in children's and youth literature. Hans Rabéns involvement in children's and youth books led to his being international acknowledged which amongst other things in 1956 resulted in his appointment as president of the International Board on Books for Young People (Åkerman 16). Marianne Eriksson, Astrid Lindgren's colleague and successor as editor noted on Astrid Lindgren's interest in tackling the publishing of children's books at the company: "It was an exciting challenge, it sounded fun and she also needed the money!" Eriksson went on; "Anyway, in the autumn of 1946 Astrid became responsible for children's literature at Rabén & Sjögren. 'I knew absolutely nothing about publishing', said Astrid herself, 'but I knew a good book when I saw it. Or rather I should say, read it. It was simply to get going, searching for children's books.'" (Eriksson 80).

When Astrid Lindgren started her work at Rabén & Sjögren she had the valuable experience of being on "the other side", the author's, and therefore had a unique insight. In 1944 she wrote an accompanying letter to Albert Bonniers publishing house where, in principle she rejected her own and first Pippi Longstocking book. This letter bears witness not only to her special brand of humour and wit, but also how a company might regard the manuscripts that flood in. In *Excelsior! Albert Bonniers förlag* 150 *år. En jubileumskavalkad i brev* (Excelsior! 150 years of Publishing at Albert Bonniers- a Jubilee Collection of Letters), the letter is reproduced in its entirety with the humorous comment: "Receiving story books, written by creative mothers who maintain that the stories have made their own children happy are an everyday part of a publisher's work. As with all manuscripts, one has to remain very alert. Occasionally there can be something of exceptional worth. A housewife, a mother-of-two living on Dalagatan in Stockholm, sent in a whole bunch" (501). Here is the accompanying letter, which is well-worth including in its entirety:

Stockholm, 27th April 1944
Albert Bonniers Publishers Ltd

Please allow me to enclose a manuscript for a children's book that I fully expect you to return instantly.

Pippi Longstocking is, as you will discover, if you take the trouble to read the manuscript, a little ubermensch in the figure of a child placed in a quite ordinary environment. Thanks to her supernatural strength and other characteristics she is completely independent of adults and lives her life just as it pleases her. In her interactions with grown-ups she always has the last word.

In Bertrand Russell (*Education and the Good Life* 85) I read that the strongest instinct in childhood is the desire to become an adult or perhaps the will to gain authority and that in fantasy the normal child clings to images that contain a desire for power.

I don't know whether Bertrand Russell is right but to judge by the sickly popularity of Pippi Longstocking over a number of years amongst my own children and their peers, I am inclined to believe it. Now, I am not so presumptuous that I imagine that just because a number of children have loved to hear about Pippi's adventures it doesn't necessarily mean that it will become a printable and readable book when I write it down on paper.

To convince myself of the situation, whatever that may be, I hereby leave this manuscript in your capable and knowledgeable hands and can only hope that you don't alert the social services. For safety's sake, I should perhaps point out that my own incredibly well brought-up small God's angels of children have not suffered any damage as a result of Pippi's behaviour. They have understood that Pippi is a special case, who in no way can be a role model for ordinary children.

With great respect,
Astrid Lindgren (501 –2)

The publisher's rejection letter is dated 20th September. It is not signed, but contains stock phrases that they would have liked to have published the book and that "the manuscript was therefore circulated for reading" but they had already purchased manuscripts for the whole of 1945 and 1946 and that "we are not ready to commit to 1947." The letter ends with: "The manuscript is very original and entertaining in all its incredibility and we truly regret that we shall not be able to publish it. We therefore return it to you with this letter by registered post" (Hjort 501). Astrid Lindgren is obliged to use similar phrases herself when, in later years, she herself is required to reject manuscripts sent in by other writers. The book about Pippi Longstocking was revised and subsequently published by Rabén & Sjögren in 1945.

Astrid Lindgren became an invaluable resource when it came to attracting new writing talent to Rabén & Sjögren. One cannot ignore her own experiences as a writer as well as her commitment and opinions about children's literature when one looks at the Swedish "golden age of children's literature". One way for the publisher to come into contact with new talent was the recurring competitions where Astrid Lindgren participated in formulating the rules, was a member of the panel of judges and took great responsibility for the competitions. That Astrid Lindgren was skilful as an author is common knowledge, but few know anything about the huge contribution that she made as an editor and even fewer can imagine how her advice and comments have shaped the authors of classic Swedish children's books for at least 25 years.

It is very interesting to see how Astrid Lindgren helped and guided a succession of her author colleagues in different ways. By studying the letters that have been preserved it is possible to construct a clear picture of how Astrid Lindgren worked and about her perception about what makes a good children's book. To sit on two chairs at the same time was not problematical for her. When she acquired her position at Rabén & Sjögren there were many who believed that her own books might take priority, but the opposite occurred. "She often went into the head of advertising and asked him not to make such a fuss of her" (Carlberg 29). In addition, Astrid Lindgren had

an obvious disposition to help and a benevolence towards achieving the overall goal that as many children as possible should have access to as much good literature as possible.

Altogether there remain about 300 letters that bear witness as to how Astrid Lindgren worked as a publishing editor.[1] Most of these are privately owned since Astrid Lindgren chose to clear her office and throw out all her papers and manuscripts when she left the company and few letters have been kept at the publishing house. Rabén & Sjögren do not have a dedicated letters archive, but it has been possible to find a small collection of letters within the company. Astrid Lindgren rarely took copies of her letters, but there are authors as well as Astrid's own relatives who have saved letters. In addition there is correspondence in the Swedish Royal Library's handwriting collection which is part of an archive that occupies 150 metres of shelves; one of the largest collections left by any individual Swede. In 2005 this archive was included as part of UNESCO's "Memory of the World Register".

2. The Market for Children's Literature

When one looks back at children's and youth literature, during the time that Astrid Lindgren worked for Rabén & Sjögren, it is clear that the market conditions were quite stable, even though there was a thorough transformation in the view both of children and of society during the 1950s and 1960s. The structural transformation of society that occurred meant that children and young adults — as they are now referred — even as readers, came to look differently. The concept of a youth market develops slowly during the 1950s and stabilised as a genre in the 1960s. Youth became a clearly defined market segment with its own interests and needs and literature developed to satisfy those desires. It is not always easy to identify how trends are created, what they are influenced by and what influence they have, but I would in any case like to highlight how changes in society lead to different styles of literature and how readers are influenced. Literature can certainly affect society in many fields, for example, by initiating debate, but here it is clear that changes have taken place in society first. It is a matter of contention whether literature for adults influences children's literature or whether it is within trend-sensitive children's literature that one can first notice new tendencies. Further, one cannot avoid the question about international influences, especially from the English speaking countries, which obviously affected Swedish children during this time.

There was no publishing policy at Rabén & Sjögren and, when one looks at the correspondence that survives, I believe that it is clear that Astrid Lindgren's perception about what constitutes a good children's or youth book weighed more heavily than fleeting trends. However one can detect a change in output and an apparent renewal in the years prior to 1970, something that certainly didn't come suddenly but cautious fluctuations had begun in the early 1960s. Development went slowly towards greater reflections of society and everyday realities; this culminated around 1970 when Astrid Lindgren left her position at the publishers. Before the 1970s, authors and publishers as well as Astrid Lindgren herself defended security and harmony in books for the young. However, this is an issue that slowly arises during the 1960s

when the political and social conscience even came to encompass children's literature. In her own books Astrid Lindgren is both a traditionalist and an innovator when she often uses old genres and literary structures and creates something new and unexpected with them and she remained true to her style even in the face of the beginnings of change in the book market. The reason for this is most probably that Astrid Lindgren had found a way of expressing herself that suited her and her many readers, and that she had a fixed idea and feeling for how a children's book should be irrespective of trends in the book market. In January 2009, in the Danish newspaper *Weekendavisen*, Liselotte Weimer reviewed, amongst other things, a new translation of Pippi Longstocking to Danish and commented, without quoting any reference, that Astrid Lindgren, in the shape of her position as a publishing editor, was holding back new trends: "Concurrently with her authorship, Astrid Lindgren was, for many years, a children's literature editor at her publishers. Here she was shown to be a clever reader with rather conservative views. It has been humorously remarked that she certainly would not publish her own books" (Weimer 3).

In *Tradition och förnyelse. Svensk ungdomsbok från sextiotal till nittiotal* Ulla Lundqvist raises the question of trend sensitivity in youth literature, which she believes to depend upon "the moral undertone that is almost always present in books for youngsters [and that] tends to make the message so clear that the aesthetic qualities are easily assigned a lesser role" (Lundqvist 36). Astrid Lindgren never renounced, either as an author or editor, the aesthetic qualities and it is my perception that she was very clear about what a good children's or youth book should look like and that she knew which way the wind was blowing.

3. Astrid Lindgren's View of Children's Books

In order to understand the background to Astrid Lindgren's position between her authorship and the manuscripts sent by others, it is fruitful to study the view of books that she presented in public. As publishing editor, she wrote sales letters to bookshops where, in both a clever and well-informed way she explained about the company's publications and attempted to encourage readership. In these letters, she wrote at the beginning "Astrid Lindgren calling." This is something that naturally ought to have contributed to awakening the readers' interest. The works of her author colleagues received the most attention even if her own books were mentioned in the letters.

A typewritten text preserved at The Royal Library explains the actual importance of Astrid Lindgren's perception of reading. She was herself a great reader, read books for both adults and children in several languages and has testified in a number of contexts how important reading was to her throughout her entire life. It was important to her to explain this to others, especially to children. I have been unable to identify where this text was published, but it is possible that it was part of the company's sales material in the form of a letter to accompany a new publication where it is aimed directly to the child reader with both challenge and persuasion:

> What kind of person are you?

Here! Here is a book. Are you happy? Yes, books are something to be happy about. And learning to read is fun. It is even more fun when you can read and know that the world is full of books that are a complete joy to read.

There are two types of people. Some love to read while others never even look at a book if they can avoid it. Which sort are you?

If only you knew how lucky you would be if you became one of the first sort! How wonderful never to sit and be bored and sigh: What shall I do? You know that all you need to do is open a book, so that you will immediately be in an enchanted world where anything at all can happen. Such that you can laugh at, cry with and even be made to shudder.

And do you know what? People who read have a much better life than people who don't. That's how it is. Now it is so that many children learn to read with pleasure. But then it is as if they lose the desire and they simply don't want to read anymore. It must be because they don't find anything attractive in reading books.

But we who have made this book, we who have really tried to make it as exciting and varied as we could. Just so that you don't lose interest. Don't do it then![2]

There are some texts where Astrid Lindgren has written about children's literature and children's reading. In these articles, written for a cultured public with an interest in literature, Astrid Lindgren has written about children's literature and her views. The first article is from the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* in November 1953 under the headline "Att skriva för barn" ("Writing for children"). There, from what we can see, several years before all the children's book theorists who have described reader-response, Astrid Lindgren, emphasised the child's role as co-creator of a work of literature and describes reading in a way that came to be known in theory as hermeneutics, an attempt to understand the reader's contact with the text and the author.

The writer should not boast too much. It is not to his credit that his words and sentences have a shimmering life which can summon bliss. It is the reader who has created the miracle. In the child, and only within the child, is an eternal, enviable fantasy that can create a fairytale castle if one only provides a pair of rough stones to build with. Everything mystical that is hidden between the covers of a book is created by the author and the reader together. (Lindgren 1953)

In the same article, Astrid Lindgren reflects on a quotation form the creator of Mary Poppins, Pamela Travers, who is reputed to have said: "I write for the child within me" and intuitively Astrid Lindgren feels that she is right: "One writes to entertain and satisfy the child that one once was" (ibid.)

The second article, "Därför behöver barnen böcker" ("Why children need books"), was written in 1958 and published in *Skolbiblioteket*. In content it is similar to the first article, but here Astrid Lindgren goes a step further when she describes how children create miracles when they read. From taking the point of view that that children co-operate by filling in "the gaps", later research by Wolfgang Iser de-

scribes the process of first reading, the subsequent development of the text into a 'whole', and how the dialogue between the reader and text takes place, she has placed great faith in the power of books and developed opinions about the ability of fantasy to change reality:

> Books need a child's fantasy, it is true. But it is truer that a child's fantasy needs books to be able to live and grow. There is nothing that can replace the book as fertile ground for fantasy. [...] A child alone with a book creates pictures somewhere in the secret rooms of the soul that are superior to everything else. Such pictures are necessary for human beings. The day that a child's fantasy can no longer create them is the day that the human race steps into poverty. All the great things that have ever occurred, happened first in someone's fantasy and how the world of tomorrow will be depends to a large degree on the power of the imagination that exists with those who are just about to learn how to read. That is why children need books.

"Litet samtal med en blivande barnboksförfattare" ("A short conversation with an aspiring author of children's books") was published for the first time in *Barn och kultur* in 1970, but since then has been reprinted and quoted in several places. Here, Astrid Lindgren uses humour as the main weapon when she pokes fun at poor children's literature as well as authors who don't ask themselves the question about how a good book for children should be. Astrid Lindgren herself answers that she has arrived at a notion of what a good children's book should be:

> It should be good. I can assure you that I have mused about it for a long time, but I can't find any other answer: It should be good." She also compares the working conditions for authors of children's literature with those of writers of books for adults. She maintains that the same freedom should apply to all authors regardless of the age of the readers: "Write freely and from the heart! I wish you and all authors of children's literature the freedom that a writer for adults obviously has, to write what he likes and how he likes.

Astrid Lindgren does not express support for a distinct ideology in the article "Litet samtal med en blivande barnboksförfattare" ("A short conversation with an aspiring author of children's books"), apart from the importance of the harmony of content and language, but she emphasis the right to freedom of expression for the authors of children's literature (Wallinder 37). If it is not an ideology it is in any case a viewpoint that should have characterised her work as a publishing editor. The starting point for the reasoning in the article is clearly based upon the experiences that Astrid Lindgren accumulated during her time as publishing editor. Even if Astrid Lindgren does not touch upon her own authorship in the article, her double role is not uninteresting here. By asserting the artistic and literary value of children's literature, placing it alongside adult literature and demanding the same treatment and appraisal she contributes to raising the status of children's literature and therefore indirectly her own

position as an artist.

Astrid Lindgren was one of the first who demanded that the quality of a children's book be the same as for a book for adults and the same conditions for authors of children's literature as for writers of books for adults, irrespective of her role. Her view has conditioned attitudes towards children and children's literature on several levels as well as contributed to the development of a serious and literary approach to books for children.

4. Work as an Editor of Children's Books

By studying the correspondence between Astrid Lindgren and "her" authors, in the same way as, for example, studying the relationships of Max Perkins at Scribner's publishing house with "his" authors Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe (Berg), one can gain an appreciation of how the influence has occurred in the relationship, but at the same time realise how complicated a tapestry is created and how difficult it is to identify the individual strands. All authors are affected by others, even world-renowned authors have been influenced by everyone from friends and wives to publishers and book buyers. Leonard S. Marcus alludes to Max Perkins in the title of his study of Astrid Lindgren's contemporary, Ursula Nordstrom who was the editor of Harper's Department of Books for Boys and Girls from 1940 to 1973, *Dear Genius: The Letters of Ursula Nordstrom*. He writes from an American perspective that she is regarded as the single most creative force in developing publishing in the field of children's literature during the 1900s and she edited many of the milestones in children's literature such as Laura Ingalls Wilders pioneer series, E. B. Whites *Charlotte's Web* (1952) and Maurice Sendaks *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963).[4] There are many similarities with Astrid Lindgren, in her attitude to those authors she guided:

> On taking charge of the department, Nordstrom made it her policy that no artist or writer wishing to present his or her work would be turned away, with or without an appointment. If she sensed that the visitor had talent — her antennae for this remained permanently extended — time and telephone, and the daunting stacks of manuscripts and mail, ceased to exist for as long as the get-acquainted session lasted. Nothing but the young aspirant's thoughts and confidences mattered to her, or so she made one visitor after another feel. (Marcus xxvii).

Ursula Nordstrom has even mentioned, in an interview in *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1979) that she had contact with the child within her and that it was essential to her success in the publishing world: "Well, I am a former child, and I haven't forgotten a thing" (Marcus xxii). In one important fact Astrid Lindgren and Ursula Nordstrom differ: Ursula Nordstrom wrote just one book herself, *The Secret Language* (1960) and was as such not active as a writer in the same way.

A long list of useful and valuable qualities and personality traits are required if one is to become a successful editor. The most important trait is to be able to discern when a writer has talent even if their manuscript does not reach the mark and to have

an eye for what can be done to rectify this, but it also requires more. Thomas McCormack, editorial director of St. Martin's Press, lists the following qualities of the ideal editor: "intelligence, sensitivity, tact, articulateness, industry, patience, accessibility, promptness, orderliness, thoroughness, a capacity to work alone, a capacity to work with others. Plus sensibility and craft. No humans need apply" (Mc Cormack 71). A good children's book editor the demands in addition, a particular feeling for how life is for a child, an understanding of how children think and understand texts and pictures and how these can be presented for young readers in a way that they can get maximum out of the literary. Peter Hollindale highlights just this in his work *Signs of Childness in Children's Books* "the children's book cannot normally be a culturally simultaneous transaction between the author and reader. It is written, in part, from memory, because the author's childhood is over." He continues: "The author must construct childhood from an amalgam of personal retrospect, acquaintance with contemporary children, and an acquired system of beliefs as to what children are, and should be like. Between the author and the child there is a cultural and historical gap, almost always of at least half a generation, usually much more" (Hollindale 12). It is the task of the editor of children's books to ensure that the author and the child meet and that the structure functions for present and future readers.

5. Astrid Lindgren as an Editor

Astrid Lindgren was a considerate, honest and professional editor who always had the child reader's interests at heart. She often wrote long typed letters giving detailed instructions on how a manuscript could be improved and explained, with care, what the flaws and weaknesses were. She had an eye and the capability to voice what she intuitively felt. She was focused and clearly explained her reasons for recommending changes in authors' manuscripts. Almost all authors have thanked her for the help that she has given them even if, at the beginning, they felt hurt that their submission was not as good as they thought when they sent it in:

> Dear Astrid Lindgren!
>
> Mrs Lindgren, naturally, does not remember me but more than 7 years ago, I sent a novel to you "July and August" which you very kindly read and criticised. It was certainly not a good work, it was rejected and Mrs Lindgren did not think either that it was the greatest novel but advised me to write more and better. I vowed never to pick up a pen again... I wrote this and that, all of which were, of course, rejected. Until one year ago when Rabén & Sjögren accepted another novel that I had written; "Grandmother and Ebony". Perhaps Mrs Lindgren has seen it at sometime at the company? It hasn't become a bestseller but has largely received positive reviews and I have come some way along the way. Now, I am not writing at all to say "what was it I said" or such like, but simply to thank you for the advice that you once gave me — to try to write and try to do better — and, in the future, I hope to do even better than the current book. I would have loved to have sent you a copy, but in arrogance I have already given out my copies and there are none left...!!! but I hope for a reprint

and then!

With hearty greetings and wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Yours affectionately E P[5]

A concrete example of how Astrid Lindgren worked, how receptive she was to a good story when she saw it and an illustration of a special sensibility toward children is the origins of *Vill du leka med mej?* (Will You Play With Me?) by Elle-Kari Höjeberg from 1962. Elle-Kari Höjeberg (b. 1952) had said that in 1959 she was with her mother, the journalist Elly Jannes, in Portugal. As a six year-old child she became ill with meningitis and when she recovered she would write a letter home to her father. Elle-Kari told the story and her mother wrote it down. Elle-Kari was a great reader as a child and had already an appreciation of how a good story should be told. The pattern is rigid with a continuous chronology and the story has an unambiguous construction with a climax where the story turns. Lisa sits in the porch and wants someone to play with. Several animals and children pass by, but none of them have time for her. Then a little kitten comes that wants to play with her and sits on her knees and purrs for a while. When it is most pleasant the story turns so that the animals as well as the children return in reverse order and want to play with Lisa but then "she played with the kitten — and they played and played — for ever" (Höjeberg 1962)[6]. When Elle-Kari and her mother arrived home from their travels, Elly Jannes showed the letter with the story to Astrid Lindgren who immediately showed interest. There were several years' delay and the young writer was 10 years old before the book was published with illustrations by Ilon Wikland and the book was translated into German, Norwegian and Danish. Now, when the journalist Elle-Kari Höjeberg looks back on her first and only children's book she is most impressed at how "Astrid Lindgren was great at taking up exciting ideas" (ibid.). It is also clear in this context that Astrid Lindgren saw that the short story would be the perfect addition to the company's series of books for the smallest children. At the beginning of the 1960s, Rabén & Sjögren published several simple picture books in a small format, white with a clear front cover illustration that told short stories for children who were not yet old enough to read ordinary picture books.

Astrid Lindgren was a witty and humorous person, and a sense of fun is something that is often mentioned as a necessary characteristic for a good children's book editor and it is something that continually leaps from the pages of the letters that have been preserved. In a letter dated 30th March 1966, Astrid Lindgren writes to a woman who has submitted a story written by her husband. Astrid Lindgren has considered the story and replies with a glint in her eye:

I have looked at your husband's tale for intelligent children and it is very skilfully done, but I think that it is more for the intelligent than for children. We have no possibility to publish the story.

With hearty greetings
Astrid Lindgren (30 March 1966)

When there was nothing else to do but reject a manuscript, Astrid Lindgren had the skill of doing so in a clear but friendly way, such as in a letter of the 9th of March 1966:

> We have read your jungle stories, but unfortunately we have no possibility to publish them in book form. The genre of speaking animals is rather over-exposed. We think it is difficult to create something fresh. But we understand that the H * * * children must have a wonderful time experiencing these adventures in the jungle together with their father.
>
> With friendly greetings
> Astrid Lindgren (9 March 1966)

On the other hand, when it comes to manuscripts that show the promise to become good books, Astrid Lindgren spends a great deal of effort to formulate what could be improved.

On 28th June 1966 Astrid Lindgren is at her summer residence in Furusund writing to the young debutant Eva Bergold who has submitted a manuscript to the publishers. She writes a several page long letter to Bergold. After the encouraging introduction she goes through the manuscript pointing out the weaknesses, suggests improvements and motivates these in detail:

> Dear Eva Bergold, clever girl, I have been sitting on my balcony here in Furusund having fun with your Autumn term. You write spiritual and amusing texts and we would love to publish your manuscript (although not until next year you understand. I hope you are aware of how it is with printing works and the way they work. So that you understand how far it is from leaving a manuscript to the final book). However, as fond as I am of you and your manuscript, I must point out that in my opinion there are a number of blemishes, which I hope to persuade you to rectify. It seems to me that you sometimes, through your love for the absurd, sometimes forget what sort of book you are writing. That you sway from one thing to another. Despite this it is in most aspects a realistic story. Language wise you can be as giddy as you like but the happening must not suddenly break away from the realistic sphere, because then one doesn't know what one is reading. Your description of people leaves something to be desired, they are a little shallow. You have a way of finding the most remarkable wording about the people in your book but fail to give us deeper knowledge about them. I don't believe, after the book that I know especially much about even Trude and Hjördis, not much more than that they are both unusually glib. (28 June 1966)

Evidence that Astrid Lindgren also tried to recruit skilful authors to Rabén & Sjögren is shown in a letter to Gertrud Lilja dated the 8th March 1950, which should have made the recipient very happy. With both humility and genuine admiration, discus-

sion about finance and argument in favour of proper young peoples' books, Astrid Lindgren tries to get her colleague to try to write for youngsters:

> Dear Mrs Lilja!
>
> I read your short story in the latest edition of *Vi*. Arnell answers the questions about why he really writes and for whom, with the words: "For each and everyone, perhaps. Anyone who reads and exclaims: there you are! There you are — I have felt exactly the same way many times when I have read Gertrud Lilja. The first time was when I was around 20 years old and I read your short story collection "People". I think that I have read most of what you have written — and I have never read a stupid or careless line that has come from your pen. There are not many authors you can say that about.
>
> Many times, I have thought about writing to you and expressing my thanks, but I didn't and I probably wouldn't have done so now had it not been for another purpose. I am employed by a publisher, Rabén & Sjögren, where I have also had published a number of children's books. I don't know if you are aware that this publisher specialises in young people's literature. In the past few days the company has announced a competition for youth novels. I have taken the liberty of enclosing an invitation to take part. Also, I would like to take a further liberty to ask— would not Gertrud Lilja be willing to write a book for Swedish youth? When one recalls the superb portrayal of a girl in "The storm passes" one realises that there is hardly a writer in the country who could have done it better than you. If you don't have the desire to enter the competition, would you consider writing a book anyway? As you see the financial terms are equally as good as for adult literature. And books for young people have a much greater longevity in general and, above all, they are sorely needed.
>
> With greatest respect,
>
> Astrid Lindgren (8 March 1950)

That an author is not an isolated genius working in a vacuum is demonstrated by Astrid Lindgren and the Finno-Swedish author Kai Söderhjelm in letters conveying views on freedom. Astrid Lindgren advocates freedom for authors of children's literature, but it is a modified freedom. Kai Söderhjelm has to consider Astrid Lindgren's view about what is commercial, what children can possibly appreciate, undefined "general orders from above", the views of librarians and teachers about what is suitable, etc. Freedom is, in other words an illusion. If one examines Astrid Lindgren's declaration of freedom in "A short conversation with an aspiring author of children's books" one finds that the freedom that she "*wishes*" [my italics] for authors of children's literature is the same that writers of books for adults have. The only conclusions that one can draw from this is that not even writers of books for adults can use their freedom fully and that for authors of children's books to have equal freedom is actually wishful thinking. Freedom is really just a fine word the meaning of which is limited by miscellaneous values and financial constraints. Freedom within a defined framework is offered to the authors, regardless of the target readership, but there is

still an important difference in the framework:

> I can imagine that an adult writer who wants to be exclusive and needs the book as a playground for his desires and anguish can, perhaps, completely ignore his readers. He can have his small, narrow readership anyway as there is always the view that there are souls that will understand him. But those who write for children and youth and refuse to think about the readers are actually writing for no-one at all. (June 1955)

What Astrid Lindgren means here is a term in research into children's literature that later became known as "adaptation" or "adaption", that is to say acclimatisation of children's literature to suit child readers.

The finances of the company are touched upon in several places in the correspondence and it is clear that Astrid Lindgren is forced to think in financial terms. Her knowledge about the book market and her experience as an author plays a role when she balances the artistic element with financial considerations in the company's output. In her role as a publishing editor, she is obliged to consider the reality of market forces. She says that the income from the Enid Blyton books finances quality publishing and that she can't "work to any other principle than to recommend books for publishing that according to my own conviction, whatever that now is, are appropriate for the readership for which they are intended" (1 June 1955). The meaning of "appropriate" is a question of interpretation, but it is interesting to observe that it is Astrid Lindgren's own conviction that governs what is published by Rabén & Sjögren. In the previously quoted letters and articles, Astrid Lindgren turns against trends. This is also true of her own authorship, for example *Bröderna Lejonhjärta* (*The Brothers Lionheart*) (1973), a genre cross-over tale with facets of both sagas and fantasy, is published during the height of social realism.

Astrid Lindgren's position as Sweden's leading author of children's literature combined with her duties as publishing editor for the largest publisher of children's books is unique and of great interest. She is genuinely skilful, diplomatic and humble in relation to the authors, who in fact were also her colleagues. In his memoirs, Hellre kärlek än krig (Rather Love than War), Kai Söderhjelm has confirmed the importance of Astrid Lindgren for him personally and for Swedish children's literature as a whole over the years: "For more than twenty years, she advised and guided me, took care of my books and was a constant support. I have perhaps already said many times that her great contribution as an editor should not be forgotten simply because she has had even greater success as an author. It is she that has made Swedish children's literature into an important and well-known branch of literature" (Söderhjelm 195).

An interesting thought is that Astrid Lindgren, despite her pronouncements against fashions and fads, is herself a trendsetter. Her personality, values and opinions carried more weight than any other publishing consideration at Rabén & Sjögren. All manuscripts landed on Astrid Lindgren's desk and it was she who kept contact with Sweden's leading authors of children's books. The perspectives that Astrid Lindgren advocated concerning the readers, language, humour, excitement, etc. in-

fluenced the output of the company for more than 25 years.

Helene Ehriander has received funds from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond for research into Astrid Lindgren's role as publishing editor.

Notes

1. Relatives have given me permission to use the letters that were written to Astrid Lindgren and by her in her role as publishing editor.
2. See Astrid Lindgren collection, Royal Library, acc 2009/28.
3. See AlvarWallinder, *Vem bestämmer*? (*Who decides*?) (Cikada: Gävle. 1987) 37.
4. Maurice Sendak was presented with the first ever Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award 2003 with Christine Nöstlinger.
5. Royal Library handwriting section.
6. Also see telephone interview with Elle-Kari Höjeberg 16 February 2009.

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mi.

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---. Letter from Astrid Lindgren to Eva Bergold, 28 June 1966, private collection.

---. Letter from Astrid Lindgren, 9 March 1966, Rabén & Sjögren's archive.

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Migration and Identity in Swedish and Canadian Historical Novels for Children

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Abstract The article on migration and historical consciousness consists of two parts: the first focuses on Swedish author Maj Bylock's *Drakskeppstrilogi* [*Dragon Ship Trilogy*], in which I relate my discussion to my doctoral thesis *Maj Bylock's Drakskeppstrilogi* [*Dragon Ship Trilogy*] *and Historical Consciousness in Ten-to-Twelve-Year-Olds*; the second part discusses three Canadian novels — Kathleen Pearson's *The Sky is Falling* (1989) and Barbara Smucker's *Underground to Canada* (1978) and *Days of Terror* (1989, 2008). The focus in the first part is on Bylock's protagonist Petite/Åsa and her development from a gender, ethnic and class perspective. With the aid of the postcolonial concepts *diaspora* and *hybrid identity*, I discuss cultural encounters resulting from migration. The female characters in Bylock's trilogy attain what the American researchers Brown and St. Clair term *empowerment*. The Viking age is compared in the second part with the three Canadian historical novels, which are set in different chronological periods but focus on the phenomenon of migration and its effects. As my research demonstrates, these novels are particularly well-suited to class discussions about ethics, the value of human beings and their cultural encounters. The analyzed novels demonstrate that the process of adaptation is not dependent primarily on context but inner strength. Children's fiction thus has an important part to play in helping young readers not only to accommodate to change but to appreciate the advantages of adopting a new country and its values — not least, it provides the opportunity to create a new identity.
Key words migration; historical consciousness; the historical novel; the "other"; empowerment

In my thesis "It Could Just As Well Have Happened today" and "Historical Consciousness in Ten- to Twelve-Year-Olds" I discuss the advantages of class discussions of fictional texts for pupils between the ages of ten and twelve, showing how these facilitate the development of historical consciousness. In the first part of the thesis, I analyze the three novels in the trilogy about the Viking age by the Swedish author Maj Bylock, *The Dragon Ship* (1997), *The Golden Sword* (1998) and *The Distant Castle* (1998), focusing on the use of fiction in social science lessons. The purpose is to show how novels can facilitate children's historical consciousness by identifying with particular characters.

Both here and in my thesis I focus on the protagonist, Petite/Åsa (later known

as Åsa) and her development in terms of gender, ethnicity and class. I use postcolonial concepts such as *diaspora* and *hybrid identity* to describe cultural encounters occurring as a result of migration (McLeod 205). McLeod (who refers to Robin Cohen's research) defines diaspora as "a sense of living in one country across time and space to another" (McLeod 207). I demonstrate that female characters achieve a high level of *empowerment*, a concept used by the American researchers Joanne Brown and Nancy St. Clair to describe their adaptation to the new country. *Empowerment* is defined as "a nourishing belief in capacity and competence" (Brown & St. Clair *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult fiction* 27).

The concept of *empowerment* is central to the portrayal of the protagonist. The protagonist's situation as a migrant points above all to cultural encounters both in the past and the present, highlighting the situation of the slaves in the Viking age. The analogy with the present ensures that the novels are excellent sources of discussions about ethics, the value of human beings and cultural encounters.

In Bylock's trilogy, Petite (a Frankish daughter of a nobleman) is kidnapped by the Vikings. The reader follows her entrance into a new, Nordic society. As a consequence of her forced migration, Petite experiences many cultural encounters. Today, immigrant children have similar experiences. Bylock's reader follows the protagonist as she develops from a young girl into a woman, a process strongly influenced by new ideas and traditions in the new country. During her adolescence, Petite makes a number of decisions that are central to her development. As a result, she becomes increasingly empowered by the experience of isolation, her subjection to multiple trials and subsequent return to society as a fully-fledged member.

In the second part of my thesis, I analyze how 11-year-olds read Bylock's trilogy. Three pupils' texts, their discussion of the novels and interviews with the pupils were documented during a six-week thematic project on the Viking age. The analysis was conducted with the aid of Judith A. Langer's concept of *envisionment building* (Langer 2011). Langer uses the word *envisionment* to refer to the world of understanding that a person has at a given point in time. The resulting envisionments constitute text-worlds in the mind; they differ from individual to individual. Envisionments are a function of one's personal and cultural experience, relationship to current experience, what one knows, how one feels, and what one is after (Langer 9). The development of pupils' historical consciousness and newly acquired knowledge can be related to the themes of the novels. By identifying with the characters as they follow the plot, pupils acquire historical knowledge while at the same time developing their historical consciousness. As I show, discussions about the books play a crucial role in this process.

Maj Bylock claims that the present exercises a strong influence on her portrayal of the past, particularly when the events are set several hundred years back in time, because the writer is able to remove any irrelevant details. The focus is instead on timeless, human phenomena and cultural encounters (Opsis Kalopsis 19).

The term "historical consciousness" has become increasingly important, particularly as history is a key subject at school and because interest in general in historical events and times remains insatiable. As Klas-Göran Karlsson (2009) argues, the

term "historical consciousness" has played a key role since the 1990s in forming how authorities and schools formulate their school curriculum goals (78). It is also important to take into consideration the views of university lecturers and professors when it comes to how historical consciousness is created and facilitated. Karlsson, for example, argues that "Every human being has an historical consciousness, which means that he or she reflects on, [and] integrates history into his or her own identity, knowledge and actions" (48). In my doctoral thesis I define historical consciousness as:

> The knowledge that all human beings exist in time and space, which means that they have an origin and a future together knowing that nothing is unchangeable. Historical consciousness deals with the interpretation of the past, the understanding of the present and ideas about the future. (Ingemansson 10)

Knowledge and analogy (Pettersson 179, 181) are two crucial perspectives in my study of historical novels for children. As already established, I focus on the protagonist, Petite's/Åsa's development in terms of gender, ethnicity and class; her development towards greater empowerment is crucial to my analysis. *Empowerment* in this context refers to the development of a high degree of knowledge that can be used to help others (Brown & St. Clair *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult fiction* 26f).

In the following discussion, the titles of Bylock's novels are abbreviated as follows: *The Dragon Ship* (DS), *The Golden Sword* (GS) and *The Distant Castle* (BF) or named *The Dragonship Trilogy*. (The abbreviations mean the Swedish titles).

Cultural Encounters "Now and Then" in Maj Bylock's Novels

The cultural contexts in which the protagonist finds herself strongly influence her transition from a girl into a woman as well as her quest for an identity in the new society. Her fictional cultural encounters and identity issues resonate strongly with the present and are reminiscent of those affecting immigrants today.

The Concept of "the Other"

Adopting a multicultural perspective, the trilogy follows the protagonist's life from girlhood to adulthood; ultimately, Petite achieves a state of *empowerment* as defined by Brown and St. Clair above, namely "a nourishing belief in capacity and competence" (Brown & St. Clair, *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult fiction* 27). Gender is an important factor in this development. Petite/Åsa experiences several important cultural encounters, beginning in her homeland, the Frankish empire. She changes during the voyage with the Vikings to the Nordic country that is to be her home. She undergoes further changes, first during her period as a slave, then when she moves to her new home in the Viking village, and finally, as an adult, when she becomes the ruler of the Viking stronghold. She experiences isolation and numerous trials, after which she is ready to be reintroduced into the new society not only as a member but as a ruler.

The Dragon Ship Trilogy was written between 1997 and 1998, a period of increasing migration to Sweden. Like the fictional Petite/Åsa in Bylock's novels, children today must make many adjustments to new customs and educational practices; they must also learn a new language. They are "the other", a central term within sociology and philosophy to denote the tendency to define oneself in relation to others. The process incorporates the tendency to idealise oneself and one's own culture. Immigrants today are "the others", strangers in a new land (Ålund 10).

An example of the "other" perspective in *The Dragon Ship* is the first time Petite/Åsa thinks about the Vikings. Reflecting on their appearance, she realises that "All people she had seen before in her life had had black or brown hair and brown eyes. Just like her. She shuddered and wondered if the Vikings really were human beings" (DS 35). Petite/Åsa is later looked upon in exactly the same way, as "the other", a character from another culture. Initially, she looks upon the Vikings as the "other", convinced that she represents the norm. This view has ethical consequences, which Petite/Åsa reflects on whenever she meets strangers.

Having served her time as a slave, she tries to re-enter society. She must face the fact that she is "the other" and learn to deal with being an outsider in the village. The situation is now reversed: as she once looked upon the Vikings, she is now regarded herself.

The central chapter of the novel is entitled "Who knows from where the winds are blowing?" (DS 102) Boel and Stein, unlike the other villagers, have no doubts about the girl whom they have brought into their home. Boel tells the villagers that she "found her", hoping that this would pre-empt any questions. As a consequence, the girl becomes known as "Åsa, the foundling" (DS 88). When no one can hear, the villagers say: "A child like that does not come from the gods. It probably comes from the trolls" (DS 88); this reminds the reader of Petite's /Åsa's own remark about the Vikings the first time she saw them (DS 35). It is clear that she is not accepted by the village people.

Finally, after many trials, Petite/Åsa is taken into the village by the most important elder, who, as he points at Åsa, remarks: "'No one knows where she comes from. But from now on she is one of us.' The village people said: 'Yes, she is one of us'" (DS 107). Children between the ages of 10 and 12 can empathize with the protagonist; at the same time, they note that situations can change. Petite/Åsa now feels safe but still she keeps her origins a secret and refuses to play with the other children, some of whom are suspicious of her because of her dark hair and unusual appearance.

Petite/Åsa has never encountered snow or winter before. Even the weather, it seems, must be a trial for her. Boel wants her to play with the other children: "'Run over to the other children', she says, as she tells Petite/Åsa to leave the cabin. Although she is frightened, the little girl runs outside. When one of the oldest girls takes her out on the ice, she realizes that "It was a long time since she [had been] so happy" (DS 109). The novel teaches us that if being "the other" is a major challenge in its own right, being forced to move to a new country and start a new life is an even greater one.

Identity and Empowerment

The second example that resonates with the present is the portrayal of Petite/Åsa's ongoing identity development. In the *Dragon Ship Trilogy*, this development is prompted by the cultural encounters that follow her migration. Her Frankish origin, gender and appearance are crucial factors, as are the changes in her geographical and historical circumstances; all must be taken into consideration when understanding the different stages of development in Åsa's identity (De los Reyes & Mulinari 14).

Petite/Åsa is a marginalized figure as she moves from place to place, a problem experienced by many immigrants today. Ethnicity and identity are strongly interrelated because it is the "variety of social practices, rituals and traditions" that identify "different collective groups" (McLeod 111). The concept of *diaspora*, as earlier mentioned, is useful in analyzing Petite/Åsa's situation in the new country. Nine different characteristics of *diaspora* can be identified, five of which apply to the present discussion: exile from the homeland, idealization of the homeland, idealization of the old home, a troubled relation with the new hosts and the possibility of an enriched life in a new and tolerant country (Cohen 161 – 162).

Identity can grow as a result of a process of *hybridization*, which incorporates mobility (McLeod 216). McLeod argues that *hybridization* is an ongoing process. Furthermore, one's "subjectivity is deemed to be composed from viable sources" (McLeod 219). McLeod also claims that fiction can shape "hybrid identities at the 'in – between' and 'living in between'" (McLeod 216). To live "in-between" causes one to feel ill at ease in both the old and new culture, a painful experience, which ultimately leads to marginalization. Alternatively, such circumstances can facilitate the development of a new identity and open up unexpected opportunities as they act as "roots to routes" (McLeod 216 – 225). Petite/Åsa exhibits a number of these traits. One early example is when she has escaped from being a slave on escaping into the woods. "She was brave and crawled out of her hiding" (DS, 61). Another example is when she has learnt how to deal with life on a farm. "Boel was pleased when she saw how Åsa took care of Gullhova, the horse" (DS,86). Åsa is also empowered when she dares to oppose the boy in action to shoot a deer in the forest: "You will not shoot" (DS, 114).

Critics have shown an increasing interest in the lives of girls and women in the past (Brown & St. Clair, *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult fiction* 53) and particularly, in empowered heroines. In the second half of the 1990's, several historical novels appeared featuring the lives of "empowered girls" (Brown & St. Clair, *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult fiction* 26). Sweden is no exception; Annika Thor's *A Faraway Island* (1996), Maj Bylock's *The Escape to the Land of Iron* (1999) and Anita Larsdotter's *Disa at Birka* (1998) all demonstrate the positive effects, particularly among women, of belief in one's capacity and competence, that is to say, in empowerment. The development of the "I" is closely related to one's gender. Historical novelists are strongly influenced by the current debate on the situation of women as they incorporate modern values into their texts. In America, for example, Karen Cushman wrote *Catherine Called Bird-*

ie in 1994, about a woman rebelling against society (Brown & St. Clair *The Distant Mirror. Reflections on Young Adult Historical fiction* 27). Petite/Åsa's developing identity as a consequence of her forced migration can be compared with the situation of immigrants today, a fact of which Maj Bylock is clearly very well aware:

> I think history is fascinating. It is important for children to know about the past in order to get references to their own lives. There are also many things in the past that can help me to tell stories about our time. [---] You can take away inessential things to bring forward timeless and universal human issues. (*Opsis Kalopsis*, 1993:1, 20)

There is clearly a strong connection between migration, class and gender in historical novels featuring female characters. In modern novels, there is an even stronger emphasis on ethnicity. *White lilacs* by Caroline Meyer(1996), for example, shows an African-American community with a girl growing up to resist social structures in the end (Brown & St. Clair, *The Distant Mirror. Reflections on Young Adult Historical fiction* 138).

In Bylock's trilogy, the central question is how her protagonist can achieve empowerment and develop a strong sense of self as opposed to a mere determination to exert power over others. "Meaningful empowerment should result from *purposeful action* rather than from innate talent or coincidental circumstances" (Brown & St. Clair, *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult fiction* 27). In the following section, Bylock's empowered protagonist is compared with the protagonists of three Canadian novels.

Cultural encounters "now and then" in Canadian novels.

Canada has a long tradition of fiction for children. Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), which may be classified as historical fiction, is widely read in Sweden. I focus here on three historical novels by two Canadian authors; all feature migration and all three are written for the same age group as Bylock's trilogy, that is 9 –12 year olds. European and North American children of this age group enjoy historical fiction (Brown & St. Clair, *The Distant Mirror. Reflections on Young Adult Historical fiction* 3 –10). Indeed, Canadian historical fiction is given pride of place in Fiona M. Collins and Judith Graham's Historical fiction for children. *Capturing the Past* (2001).

The three novels discussed here describe growing up under trying circumstances. The child protagonists strive for empowerment. As already established, migrant children must adjust to a new environment, they experience isolation, are subjected to many challenges; their ultimate goal is to be reintroduced into society (Brown & St. Clair, *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult fiction* 26 – 27). I will look at the protagonist's development with respect to migration and relate this to Bylock's three Swedish novels about the Viking age. The focus is on cultural encounters during the children's migration.

As already established in the earlier discussion of Bylock's trilogy, those dispers-

ed from their homeland are characterized by an idealization of the supposed ancestral home, and a troubled relationship with the host society (Cohen 161; see the section "Identity and empowerment" above). These features of *diaspora* are central elements in the following discussion.

Three Canadian Novels

The first novel to be discussed in terms of migration and identity is Barbara Smucker's *Underground to Canada* (1978), which describes a flight from slavery in nineteenth-century America. Taken from her mother by a ruthless slave trader, all Julilly has left is the dream of freedom. She thinks about a land where it is possible to be free, a haven to which she and her friend Liza may perhaps come one day. When people from the Underground Railroad offer help, the two girls seize the chance to escape. They are slaves without any rights. Their trials are three-fold: they must escape, walk in the swamps dressed like boys and hide from slave hunters. When they are finally reintegrated into society, the empowerment process is complete: "Your relative Lester works in this town and he will take care of you now" (Smucker, *Underground to Canada* 162, Swedish version). This is the same sort of identity building that Petite/Åsa goes through in *The Dragon Ship* and the two following novels.

Barbara Smucker is also the author of *Days of Terror* (1989), about a German boy, Peter Neufeld, who lives with his family in a Mennonite community in Russia in 1917. After experiencing the terror of revolution, parts of the family manage to migrate to Canada. The Mennonite community in Canada arranges and pays for the journey. Peter is 10 years old, and despite his young age, has longed for migration for some time. He encounters many trials: The family is robbed by bandits and suffers from the plague. As a means of survival, Peter formulates a mission of his own: to achieve empowerment (although he does not use the actual term, of course).

Finally, the family has the money to migrate. They endure a difficult journey to Canada. When the family is reintroduced into society, Peter is described in the following terms: "As if he could almost take Otto's place as a man on the farm" (Smucker, *Days of Terror* 47). The novel contains several examples of the effects of *diaspora*, including a longing for the homeland: "It was just like the wagon that had carried them to the train in Lictenau, South Russia, when the cherries were ripe in the orchards of Tiegen" (Smucker, *Days of terror* 235).

1989 saw the publication of Kathleen Pearson's *The Sky is Falling* (1989), in which Norah and her brother Gavin are sent to Canada from England in the summer of 1940. The circumstances in their village are difficult, causing their parents to be anxious about their safety. When they leave England, the children are told: "When things go wrong, as they often will, remember you are British and grin and bear it. Be truthful, brave, kind and grateful" (Pearson 41).

Norah is isolated both at school and in her new home (Pearson 215). She undergoes several trials, the effects of which are exacerbated by the fact that her hostess has no knowledge of children, which causes considerable problems between the two. One day, for example, Norah and her friends are making a bonfire in a ravine but the fire gets out of control and they have to call for the fire department. Norah immediate-

ly thinks of Guy Fawkes in the seventeenth-century England and is inspired. But she is blamed for the fire and feels even worse about her situation (Pearson 189 – 194). She also attempts to return to England with her brother but they are discovered (Pearson 200). After all these experiences, she remarks: "I *hate* the war. I just want to go *home*"; home is the children's goal and the opposite of where they are (Pearson 204. Pearson's italics). As Norah's situation improves and she is gradually absorbed into society, Aunt Florence realizes that it is her fault that the children tried to run away (Pearson 209). Gradually, Norah is able to believe in her own capacity and competence, thereby achieving a state of empowerment as previously defined.

All three novels demonstrate a strong interest in providing historical perspectives that are analogous to our time and also describing strong female protagonists. Peter in *Days of Terror*, for example, enjoys the same empowerment as the girls in the other novels do.

Comparison with *Anne of Green Gables*

Anne of Green Gables is the final novel to be discussed here. Although the protagonist is not an immigrant, her life is similar to that of a migrant today in that she must learn to adjust to a new environment. Before arriving at Green Gables, she lives an isolated life, works hard and is lonely. As an orphan, poverty is her lot.

At Green Gables, her trials stem more from her personality than the environment. She must learn to control her temper and moderate her stubbornness. Theneighbors fail to see Anne's good qualities. It is not until she shows that she can be useful to Marilla that she can become a fully-fledged member of society. Up to this point, she must rely on her mental strength. By taking care of things and people, such as a three-year-old girl who has croup, she becomes increasingly empowered. She takes care of the child until the doctor comes and actually saves the child's life (Montgomery 203 – 204). Her stern adoptive mother Marilla, who initially did not want to take Anne into her house, finally acknowledges that her life would be dull without Anne, even admitting this to Anne herself (Montgomery 236). Marillas brother Matthew seldom says anything concerning Anne's behaviour because he is aware that Anne has difficulties in adjusting. But one day after Anne has done something odd again, he defends her manners: "Don't give up all your romance, Anne," he whispered shyly, " a little of it is a good thing – not to much, of course- but keep a little of it, Anne, keep a little of it" (Montgomery 227). Although Anne is not an immigrant in the normal sense of the word, she must nonetheless accommodate to her new environment and the ideas, values and expectations of her new family.

In all the novels discussed here, the child protagonist finds him-/herself in a new environment. The migration that takes place in the Viking age (Bylock) as well as in the first (Smucker) and second world wars (Pearson) gives rise to a struggle for survival, religious trials and a painful process of accommodation to the new environment. The protagonists also discover, however, that there are some positive effects of migration: people are helpful, and values and standards are more flexible in the new country. A direct parallel can be made here with the present. It is thus not surprising that Maj Bylock chooses to place present-day values into historical settings: it

is only the chronological period that changes, not the values themselves. This is also true of Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*.

All of the novels discussed here show the importance of adaptation to the new environment as part of the process of achieving empowerment. This entails a series of adventures in which the protagonist learns to become a leader and put others before him/herself. Like so many immigrants today, he or she is initially "the other" but ultimately becomes absorbed into the new society. Survival is contingent on being part of a context and contributing to society as a fully-fledged member. Bylock's, Pearson's, Smucker's and Montgomery's novels are sources of inspiration to females in particular — especially female immigrants — as they demonstrate that the process of adaptation is not dependent on historical setting but on inner strength. Children's fiction thus has an important part to play in helping young readers not only to accommodate to change but to appreciate the advantages of adopting a new country and its values — not least, the opportunity to create a new identity.

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The Doctor and the Pastor: On Love and Evil in Hjalmar Söderberg's *Doctor Glas* and Bengt Ohlsson's *Gregorius*

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Abstract This article investigates the representations of evil in Hjalmar Söderberg's *Doctor Glas* (1905) and Bengt Ohlsson's, *Gregorius* (2004). In the definition of evil that is proposed, motivation is crucial, and Glas's narrative is considered to be an attempt to find an acceptable excuse for the murder of Gregorius. The portrayal of Gregorius as an evil monster is addressed in relation to Glas as an unreliable narrator. Social and psychological repression is discussed and Gregorius is analyzed as a mirror of Glas's personality. The theme of evil is also related to the return of the concept of evil in contemporary public debate and is considered as one possible explanation for the continued popularity of *Doctor Glas*. Finally, as *Doctor Glas* is read alongside its recent re-vision *Gregorius*, it is suggested that Bengt Ohlsson offers a strategy for counteracting evil. The novel is seen as an illustration of the concept "moral imagination" in seeking to lessen the distance between the evildoer and his victim.
Key words Söderberg; Ohlsson; evil; ethics; re-vision

Taking a look at the Swedish book market in recent years it is easy to get the impression that we are a nation fascinated by evil. Crime novels are so popular it has become common to talk about "det svenska deckarundret" ("the Swedish detective story miracle," in English sometimes called *Swedish, or Scandinavian, noir*) when referring to the works of, among others, Camilla Läckberg, Liza Marklund, and not least Stieg Larsson, whose books about Lisbeth Salander as a heroine with superb skills in martial arts as well as computer hacking have recently reached Hollywood and been made into action-packed movies. In addition, media contributes to an increased sense of fear by delighting in reports about murders and violence both at home and in other parts of the world. This article stems from an interest in the questions of why we are drawn to depictions of evil and what fictional depictions of evil may add to our understanding of the concept. These questions will be addressed as I analyze the representations of evil in Hjalmar Söderberg's *Doctor Glas* and Bengt Ohlsson's *Gregorius*.

My starting point is the classic Swedish novel *Doctor Glas* (1905) by Hjalmar Söderberg (1869 – 1941). In this short but thought-provoking novel, Söderberg's

eponymous protagonist decides to kill the husband of one of his patients. The unfortunate victim is pastor Gregorius, described by Söderberg as a heinous man. He is married to a beautiful young woman named Helga, who seeks out Doctor Glas to ask him to help her keep Gregorius, whom she finds sexually repulsive, away from her bed. The doctor complies with her wishes, partly because he disagrees with the institution of marriage, which he feels legitimizes rape under the name of marital rights, and partly because he has a romantic interest in Helga himself. He advises the couple to refrain from further sexual activity and suggests that they have separate bedrooms. When this does not help, he packs the pastor off to the spa town Porla for six weeks, thus allowing his wife to enjoy her affair with another man in relative freedom. But at the end of the summer, the pastor returns as vigorous and as desirous of his wife as ever, and Glas sees no other way out of the situation but to kill him. At the climax of the novel, he offers the pastor a lethal pill, which Glas had saved for himself if life were ever to become too much for him.

99 years after the publication of *Doctor Glas*, Bengt Ohlsson's (b. 1963) novel *Gregorius* (2004) added new life to the interest in Söderberg's work by providing us with a portrait of the victim of the doctor's concoction.[1] By responding in this way to Söderberg's novel, Ohlsson not only managed to craft an award-winning novel of his own (it won the prestigious Swedish August Prize of 2004), but caused a spate of revived interest in *Doctor Glas* and confirmed Söderberg's novel as a true classic in the Swedish literary tradition. It was translated into English in 2007 and received generally favorable reviews. Here we follow the clergyman on what is to be the last summer of his life, when he learns of his wife's unfaithfulness; for fear of his own health, he seeks out Dr Glas, who sends him to Porla, where he meets another woman and a different life begins to seem possible. Reading *Gregorius* alongside *Doctor Glas*, I discuss how the more recent novel comments on the parent text, particularly when it comes to the theme of evil.

Söderberg's dramatic *Doctor Glas* has been performed on stage many times and just last year *Gregorius* was at Stockholm Stadsteater. The texts are necessarily in dialogue with one another, and they voice concerns about the problems of life and death, faith and love, that are as relevant today as they were a century ago. In the following, I examine the representation of evil in *Doctor Glas* and *Gregorius*, suggesting that this subject at least partly explains the continued popularity of *Doctor Glas*.

1. *Doctor Glas* in the 21st Century

There is no doubt that Söderberg's text is still topical and is discovered by new readers each year. *Doctor Glas* has many qualities that contribute to its status as one of the Swedish classics, such as the detailed descriptions of Stockholm around the turn of the twentieth century; recurring themes like love, sexuality and the critique of social conventions; and, not least, Söderberg's lucid and memorable style of writing.

Doctor Glas is a complex novel that does not readily lend itself to categorization. It is ethical and philosophical tract, crime novel, love story, and social critique all in one. Hjalmar Söderberg called *Doctor Glas* "en tankebok," which translates into "a

book of thoughts" (Holmbäck, *Hjalmar Söderberg: ett författarliv* 237). It includea philosophical questions concerning contemporary social mores, public and private moral — and not least, ethical questions about life and death. The book offers no simple solutions to the questions it raises; instead, it asks readers to form their own opinions. Issues such as euthanasia, abortion, suicide and women's rights that are addressed in the book were hotly debated in the last century. However, in a recent interview Kerstin Ekman instead calls *Doctor Glas* "en känslobok" — "a book of emotions" — noting that the main character and narrator Glas's hatred of Gregorius suffuses his narrative from the first page.[2] Her comment also indicates that Söderberg's text is still open to interpretation.

Many readers are drawn to Söderberg's work because of his vivid descriptions of the Swedish capital at the turn of the twentieth century.[3] Bure Holmbäck compares him with the 18th century poet and composer Carl Michael Bellman, and to Söderberg's contemporary August Strindberg — two authors who are famous for immortalizing Stockholm through their vivid and atmospheric descriptions of Stockholm in their work.[4] To readers of today, Holmbäck suggests, nostalgia is part of the attraction of Söderberg's work: nostalgia for a Stockholm of the recent past, when the capital was less crowded and the pace of life slower. On the whole, Holmbäck suggests that Hjalmar Söderberg is something of a cult author with many avid followers who read his books and visit all the places he describes, book in hand, to see for themselves the places that meant so much to the protagonists of his novels.[5] His position as a cult author is most likely a result of the fact that Söderberg has created his own fictional universe where not only characters (as mentioned above), but also themes and settings recur in several texts. Setting and atmosphere include, for example, Skeppsholmen, the bells of Jakob's church, Rydberg's bar, and falling snow. Recurring themes are the critique of the Christian morality and Protestant preachers, the dangers of searching for truth, and the discussion of contemporary politics.[6] Söderberg's critique of religion is coupled to that of the marriage institution, which he found particularly oppressive for women.[7]

Another explanation for the continued popularity of Söderberg's work is his ability to combine clarity of style with complexity of thought in such a way that certain sentences are so often quoted that they have become almost proverbial. In an investigation of the reception of *Doctor Glas* throughout the 20th century, Eva Akinvall Franke notes that Swedish critics, while offering at times widely diverging opinions on the themes and characters of the book, have remained positive in their assessment of Söderberg's style.[8] As if to confirm his unique ability to express profound thoughts about man's condition in lucid, memorable language, a collection of quotations was published in 2008 (Ed. Kaj Attorps. *Jag tror på köttets lust och själens obotliga ensamhet* [*I Believe in the Lust of the Flesh and the Eternal Loneliness of the Soul*]).

Finally, *Doctor Glas* is a text that raises many questions and offers few definite answers; this is part of the explanation as to why it does not seem dated, but continues to appeal to readers today. When it was first published, the doctor's positive attitude to suicide, abortion and euthanasia, in addition to the murder that takes place, caused a scandal. As many critics have noted, for example, Kerstin Ekman in the in-

troduction to the most recent Swedish edition of *Doktor Glas* (2011), and Margaret Atwood in her review of the 2002 English version of the novel, Glas exhibits a very modern personality: he no longer believes in God or in any absolute truths, and he clearly displays *fin-de-siècle* melancholy. He is in some ways a predecessor of Camus' Existentialist protagonist Meursault. Glas is not quite as indifferent as Meursault as he carefully conceives his plan to take the parson's life, but when the deed is done he is only afraid of being caught; he does not regret his act and has no feelings of guilt.

In the introduction to the 1963 English translation (by Paul Britten Austin), William Sansom observes that "in most of its writing and much of the frankness of its thought, it might have been written tomorrow" (7). Almost forty years later, in 2002, it was published again,[9] and reviewed by Terry Eagleton, who remarked that *Doctor Glas* is "the very paradigm of modern fiction" with its focus on a sensitive, isolated character, who tries to break out of the stifling social conventions embraced his philistine peers (Eagleton 2092). Dr. Glas's doubts and *angst*; his failure to feel at peace with his existence are aspects of the text that give it a distinctly modern quality. It is also possible that a renewed interest in the concept of evil plays a part in the continued popularity of *Doctor Glas*.

2. What Is Evil?

In a recent book devoted to an investigation of the concept of evil, Ann Heberlein claims that the use of the concept in Swedish media and public debate, as in much of the Western world, has changed in recent years (*En liten bok om ondska* [*A Little Book about Evil*], 2010). Citing American philosophers, such as John Kekes and Russ Schafer-Landau, she suggests that the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, 9/11, changed American attitudes to what was right and wrong and good and evil. Before then, it was considered old-fashioned and unproductive to apply the term "evil" as an explanation for certain attitudes or behavior. It was a concept that did not fit into the paradigm of moral relativism. After 9/11, this changed and the concept of 'evil' returned as a mode of explanation both in American and Swedish public debate.[10]

What, then, is evil? To Zygmunt Bauman, this question is "*un*answerable because what we tend to call 'evil' is precisely the kind of wrong which we can neither understand nor even clearly articulate, let alone explain its presence to our full satisfaction. We call that kind of wrong 'evil' for the very reason that it is unintelligible, ineffable and inexplicable" (54). Evil is incomprehensible; frightening, senseless—in short, it is a mystery that attracts us because we fail to understand it.

John Kekes, however, does not stop at calling the question of what evil is "unanswerable." In *The Roots of Evil*, he claims that the evil of an action is made up of a combination of three components:

> the malevolent motivation of evildoers, the serious, excessive harm caused by their actions; and the lack of a morally acceptable excuse for the actions [⋯]

> Evil actions violate their victims' physical security and thus transgress fundamental moral prohibitions that protect minimum conditions of human well-being. (2)

In addition, Heberlein argues that evil deeds are characterized by insight and intention, that is, there is a morally responsible agent who is fully aware of the harm he causes, and causing harm is the aim of the deed.[11] In other words, if a person causes harm without meaning to do so, this is not an evil deed even if the result may be seen as evil. In addition, an evil deed is perceived as incomprehensible or meaningless as there is no apparent reason for the (often excessive) violence, such as self-defense.

She goes on to discuss our need to be able to tell who is evil and who is not, to separate the potential evildoers ("them"), from ordinary citizens with no evil tendencies ("us"). The bottom line of Heberlein's analysis is that, in the end, there is no safe way of telling who is capable of murder or torture, and who will refuse it. Studies such as Hanna Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963), or more recently on American soldiers in Afghanistan are cited as support for this observation. Bauman reasons along the same lines, asserting that "evil may hide *anywhere*; that it does not stand out from the crowd, does not bear distinctive marks and carries no identity card; and that *everyone* may be found to be currently in its service, to be its reservist on temporary leave or its potential conscript" (67). What both Bauman and Heberlein suggest is thus that evil may walk among us without being recognized. There is an element of unpredictability to evil as there is simply no way of knowing what our neighbors, or even what we ourselves, are capable of.

This is a frightening thought, which is readily translated into the realm of fiction. In his study of the "psychological thriller," John-Henri Holmberg suggests that readers are attracted to the genre because in this type of literature we can encounter the unknown and incomprehensible in the human psyche. Holmberg explains that *Doctor Glas* is not an example of a psychological thriller because of Söderberg's focus on the doctor's rational analysis of his options. While I agree with this definition, having said above that it is very difficult to pinpoint the belonging of Doctor Glas to any *one* genre, I believe the point Holmberg makes about the reason for the renewed popularity of the psychological thriller in the late 20th century is true of Söderberg's novel as well. He says that the history of the 20th century shows that the evil which resides within us is infinitely greater than that which is found in the supernatural monsters of fiction. Our recent history has forced us to ask who we really are; and what monsters may hide inside us, or inside our pleasantly smiling neighbors. Söderberg's text continues to speak to us through the past violent century, inviting the reader to grapple with these inner monsters and our capacity for evil.

On the one hand, Glas is the evildoer who with malevolent intent causes his victim serious harm. On the other hand, his narrative is an attempt to explain that he has an "acceptable excuse" for murder, and it is constructed so that it seems to be *his* well-being that is threatened by the priest and what he represents. This tension is part of the text's force; the couple Glas — Gregorius are the main focus of my analy-

sis.

3. Dr. Glas: An Unreliable Narrator

It is significant that Söderberg has chosen a doctor as his protagonist in *Doctor Glas*. His profession is dedicated to saving lives, and yet he becomes a "conscript of evil." Glas is a well-to-do, well-respected member of society, and his patients appear to find him trustworthy, but there is more to the doctor than meets the eye. In Söderberg's text, we follow the development of the main character from an ordinary, if dissatisfied, professional man to a cold-blooded murderer. This is an intimate story dealing with sexuality, death and unfulfilled desire. It is told in the form of first person notations in his journal, giving the text a sense of immediacy as we can follow the development of his line of thought and his progress from thought to action on an almost daily basis. There is an unrelenting pace to the narrative as it moves on towards its final horrific destination.

The choice of narrative perspective also means that Glas is in total control of his own story as he chooses what to put in his journal and what to leave out. In the first entry, on June 12, he tells the reader what to expect from his story as he states the terms of narration:

> What I set down on these pages isn't a confession. To whom should I confess? Nor do I tell the whole truth about myself, only what it pleases me to relate, but nothing that isn't true. Anyway, I can't exorcise my soul's wretchedness — if it is wretched — by telling lies. (16)

The first sentence points both to his loneliness and his lack of faith. As a narrator, he promises to be honest, but only to a certain degree. The final two sentences reveal his belief in the importance of being truthful as well as his self-doubt, which is to play an important part in the subsequent unfolding of events.

He is, of course, aware that anything he commits to paper can serve as evidence against him in case of a trial. As shown in the quotation above, he actually acknowledges that there are certain details he has decided to keep to himself, thus signaling to the reader to be on his or her guard as there may be hidden truths beyond what is stated in the text — and perhaps even beyond the doctor's knowledge. On the day he has served the Rev. Gregorius his lethal pill (August 22), late at night after the deed is done, Glas feels paranoid and repeatedly checks that the door is locked, asking himself what to do with all the notes he has kept. The secret drawer in the writing desk is no good, as he believes it can be spotted quite easily. He considers hiding them in the attic among his old medical books, but in the end he concludes that it does not matter, there will be plenty of time to burn them if the need arises (127–28). Stealth and mystery are significant parts of the doctor's narrative situation.

Lars O. Lundgren discusses the improbability of the narrative situation, that is, that the doctor would actually be in a condition to keep a diary while planning such a vicious act — and to do it in such a stylistically perfect way. This is a contradiction that Söderberg himself has noted himself, but contemporary critics did not question

this arrangement.[12]

While he is a man of great intellectual power who is capable of complex logical reasoning, as shown in the dialogues the doctor has with himself about whether to kill the pastor or not, he reveals that he is not a reliable narrator. His hatred of Gregorius and his love of Helga both make narrative objectivity impossible. The strength of the first-person perspective is that it draws the reader into the mind of the protagonist and lets her see and feel with him. But it soon becomes clear that the doctor's aim is to convince himself, and the reader, that he has an "acceptable excuse," as Kekes put it, for killing the parson. A large part of the book is made up of the doctor's reasoning and critics have been divided in their evaluation of the strength of his reasoning. There are those who, like Reed Merrill, find the murder of Gregorius "ethically justifiable" (47), while others are not convinced. Ann Heberlein, for example, reads *Doctor Glas* in the light of Kant and finds that Glas flouts "the good will" and abuses his autonomy.[13] This question takes us to the motive for his deed.

4. "And So the Parson Must Go:" On Dr. Glas's Motive

Considering the unreliability of Glas as a narrator, his motive for killing the pastor is a question that remains open for debate. It could be called a crime of passion, but it is not done in the heat of emotional turmoil, and Glas has no cause for revenge or self-defense. The doctor comes across as a very rational and prudent man, who only decides to act after careful deliberation, and he knows that Helga is already committed to another man, her lover Klas Recke. One could, of course, argue that Glas has the romantic notion that Helga could one day become his. However, Glas's hatred of Gregorius is obvious from the beginning and he expresses a wish to kill the priest before he knows about his marital problems.

In the first pages of the book there are several hints at what is to come as Glas abjures the idea of his diary as "confession" (16) and wonders why he cannot sleep, as he has committed no "crime". Moreover, meeting the parson makes him think about the old conundrum of whether one would choose to "murder a Chinese Mandarin and inherit his riches" by simply pressing a button in the wall. Glas translates this question to the Rev. Gregorius and concludes that if it was a question of murdering the parson, he would press that button (15). This anecdote is important in that it points to the significance of distance between the perpetrator and the victim. The remainder of Glas's narrative is an attempt to increase this distance by objectifying and demonizing Gregorius.

By virtue of his profession, Rev. Gregorius represents attitudes and beliefs that Glas rejects. In Glas's opinion, the social rules of his time, mainly dictated by the Protestant church, prevent men and women from happiness by imposing strict regulations on love. As Terry Eagleton puts it, *Doctor Glas* is "not about the dreadfulness of murder but the horror of repression" (2092).[14] The world that Glas lives in and reacts to is "a social order that stifles sexuality, terrorizes women, denies the body, and sees wretchedness as the surest sign that you are living an upright life" (Eagleton 2092). If we accept this description, Glas's actions become comprehensible. To Glas, it is "the social order" that is evil, then, and it is the duty of a thinking man

to react. Helga's vulnerability at the hands of Gregorius suggests that women were the particular victims of this social order.

Eagleton even goes so far as to call the act of killing Gregorius "entirely altruistic" (2092), thus suggesting that the doctor was acting out of an unselfish concern for Helga. I do not agree with this analysis, but suggest that the doctor was motivated by self-interest manifested through his desire to act. He claims to have felt like a passive spectator for too long, and he wants to become a man of action:

> Often in my youth I have thought: To have been there! To have had the chance! To be allowed to give, for once, and not always receive. It's so dreary, always moving on alone, with a soul barren of fruit, at one's wits' end to know what to do to feel that one is something, means something, or to have a little respect for oneself. (59)

This passage indicates that the doctor feels like an outsider; someone who is not really part of life and who has lost respect for himself as a result. To act, to help someone, will make him a participant in life, and give him an active role in the flow of events. The lack of self-respect he voices here is important as it demonstrates that the deed he is about to do is an intensely personal act. The execution of the plan is shaded in secrecy and not even Helga must know who is responsible for it.

Later, in a long dialogue with himself about contemporary morals, the doctor says: "I want to act. Life is action, When I see something that makes me indignant, I want to intervene" (93). He wants to be a man of action and believes that killing the priest will make him one.[15] Concern for Helga is secondary to this desire, serving primarily as the impetus for the act that the doctor believes will make him the man he wants to become.

The doctor continues his dialogue with himself revealing his attitude to life and the present social order:

> The law only gives me the right to kill another in self-defence, and by self-defence the law only means defence when in direct peril of my own life. The law does not let me kill someone else to save my father or my son or my best friend, or to protect my beloved from violence or rape. In a word, the law is absurd; and no self-respecting person allows his actions to be determined by it. (94)

Here we see Glas, the moral individualist: if the laws are unjust, breaking them is defendable. Man must think for himself and act according to his own conscience and one should question laws when one finds that they are wrong. He goes on, "Morality, that's others' views of what is right…I'm a traveler in this world; I look at mankind's customs and adopt those I find useful. And morality is derived from '*morales*', custom; it reposes entirely on custom, habit; it knows no other ground" (94).

In the dialogues that Glas has with himself as he considers murdering the parson, the reader is invited into an active engagement with the text. This aspect of the text has caused some critics to complain about the novel's "stubborn problem-discus-

sion", which risks causing "alienation in the modern reader;" a point first made by Erik Hjalmar Linder (46), and later reiterated by George C. Schoolfield (493).[16] But the opposite might in fact be as true. Modern readers could well find such discussion challenging, as they are forced to choose sides along with the doctor. The strength of the narrative is the sharpness of the limited scope (even if it has its risks as I suggested above), whereby we are drawn into the doctor's world and step by step brought up to the final vicious act. Kerstin Ekman's characterization of *Doctor Glas* as a 'book of emotions' suggests there are yet other rewards for the reader. Yvonne Leffler argues that reading about evil and horror may be emotionally rewarding for the reader as well. Leffler, who analyzes horror stories and films, points out that reading fictional accounts of evil is a safe way of dealing with fears that we face in a threatening world. In addition, the depictions of crimes and horrors give us knowledge about what scares us and help us handle fears we have in real life.[17] The popularity of crime fiction mentioned in the introduction partly arises out of this need. Söderberg's *Doctor Glas*, which takes us inside the mind of a murderer-to-be, offers a similar combination of menace and security. In these passages, readers get access to "emotional and cognitive experiences that we are not allowed or do not allow ourselves in real life" (Leffler 271).

Finally, while social repression (primarily through conventional morality and the marriage institution) was part of Glas's alleged motivation for his crime, and part of the "terror" of his narrative; individual psychological repression is also a significant factor of Glas's motive. Love, sex and marriage are topics often addressed by Söderberg and in *Doctor Glas* these relate to the decision to kill the parson. Bure Holmbäck notes that in comparison to other works, such as *Den allvarsamma leken* (*The Serious Game*) and *Gertrud*, Söderberg's attitude to eroticism in *Doctor Glas* is unusual. It is part of the psychology of the character Dr. Glas: while he is intellectually sharp, he is essentially a "sterile nature" (1969: 117). To Lars O. Lundgren, Hjalmar Söderberg's protagonist has built a wall against the dangerous and dark side of existence. He is a man in need of control, above all control of sexual instincts, and he has a cerebral attitude to life.[18] Early in his narrative, Glas confesses that "at past thirty years of age, [he has] never been near a woman" (16). He criticizes marriage which he thinks is too seldom based on feelings and too often serves only to give social sanction to child-bearing; and he cannot understand the pleasures of "instinctual satisfaction" when the consequences seem so dire: to the doctor, a death bed is not nearly as horrible as childbirth, "that terrible symphony of screams and filth and blood" (21). Ironically, the physical aspects of life—and love—are repulsive and frightening to Söderberg's doctor. He can only conceive of Gregorius's desire for his wife as an example of the instinctual satisfaction which he finds "ugly, indecent" (20). Gradually, the parson appears as the embodiment of all that the doctor fears and rejects.

The following observation by Terry Eagleton points to another aspect of the motive:

> As a physician, Glas has power over life and death—and to that extent he re-

> sembles the novelist, who can snuff out a character or bring one to birth with a flick of the pen. The artist, in turn, is a double of the master criminal, since both regard themselves as superior to the common herd and unconstrained by their timidly conventional values. There is something exquisitely mirror-imaging, then, in an artist writing about a doctor who turns his hand to crime. (2092)

The idea of "mirror-imaging" that Eagleton describes here is very interesting and I would suggest that it works on another level as well. Looking closer at the doctor and the parson, we see that Gregorius is the negative image of Glas. In his attitudes and behavior, Rev. Gregorius represents everything that the doctor loathes. In this analysis, it is important to remember that the portrait of Gregorius in *Doctor Glas* is not typical of Söderberg's depictions of clergymen. While he would often portray them with ridicule and irony, and without much sympathy, the hatred and disgust that is part of Doctor Glas's reactions to Gregorius are atypical when seen in relation to Söderberg's other works.[19] While Söderberg was critical of the Protestant church and its representatives, the clergymen, the portrait of Gregorius is significant in what it tells us about the main character. In an act of reversed mirror-imaging, these depictions serve the purpose of describing the doctor's psychological make-up rather than that of the pastor.[20]

While contemplating the idea of murdering Gregorius, Dr. Glas considers his own reaction to the vicar:

> I'm scared. This is a nightmare. What have I to do with these people and their filthy affairs! The priest is so loathsome to me I'm scared of him—I don't want his fate mixed up with mine. What do I know about him? What I loathe about him isn't 'him', himself, but the impression he has made on me—he has certainly met hundreds and thousands of people without affecting them as he does me. The image he has deposited in my soul can't be wiped out just because he disappears, least of all if he disappears because of me. Already, alive, he has come to obsess me more than I like; who knows what he can get up to when he's dead? (99–100)

Here, Glas confesses that he is afraid of his own reactions to Gregorius. He also admits to not knowing the priest, and that the priest is a figment of his own imagination. He recognizes that he has become 'obsessed' by the priest, which indicates that he is aware that he is being unreasonable (and perhaps unfair) in his judgment. The passage indicates that there is something about Gregorius that resonates within Glas in a particular way, and that others are not affected as he is. His hatred of the parson is so personal and intense that we might even take the mirror image a step further and say that the reason why Gregorius is so odious to him is that he embodies qualities that Glas denies within himself: ugliness (the doctor has revealed that he is not happy with his own looks), sensuousness (he had a love affair in his early youth, but it came to a tragic end and he has never been near a woman since), and the need for spiritual communion and fellowship (which the parson has found through marriage

and religion, but which the solitary Glas cannot enjoy). In this twosome we find the man of science against the man of faith; one has power over people's bodies while the other is concerned with their souls;[21] Glas has an analytical approach to life; is celibate and believes in controlling sexual instincts, while the parson is twice married and a passionate man who refuses to refrain from sex with his wife even though she no longer reciprocates his feelings. But the doctor knows that this monster that he vilifies throughout his narrative will continue to wield power over him even after its death. He may kill Gregorius, but the monster remains within.

5. Bengt Ohlsson's *Gregorius*: *Doctor Glas* Revisited

In Bengt Ohlsson's novel, *Gregorius*, we become acquainted with the man who, while he plays the role of villain to Söderberg's protagonist Dr Glas, remains distant to the reader. We are repeatedly informed by Glas of the clergyman's offensive physiognomy, his tendency to pontificate, his hypocrisy and, not least, his lasciviousness. As I have suggested above, we may read the depictions of his monstrosity for what they reveal about the psyche of Dr. Glas. There is not very much direct characterization of Gregorius through actions or speech, but instead his unattractive personality is brought out in his wife's confidences to the doctor, who then expands upon this information. To some extent, he is a figment of Glas's imagination, rather than a character in his own right. His life is in the hands of the doctor both literally and figuratively as, bit by bit, he is made into a monster by Glas. Here, he tells his own story and, in the process, his wife Helga is portrayed as more complex as well. She, too, appears as a flat character in *Doctor Glas*; she is put on a pedestal and referred to as "The Maiden Silkencheek" (45), or "loveliest of blooms and of women" (107). It is part of the fictional universe that Söderberg created in his novels to let the same characters return in different texts. For example, Martin Birck and Markel, who appear here as friends of Dr Glas also feature in other works (see for example, *Förvillelser* [*Delusions*], 1895, and *Martin Bircks ungdom* [*Martin Birck's Youth*], 1901) and the doctor himself returns thirteen years later in *Jahves Eld* (*Yahweh's Fire* 1918), so we may say that Ohlsson works in the true spirit of Hjalmar Söderberg when he decides to give a rather anonymous character a fuller story in *Gregorius*.[22]

Reviewing *Gregorius* in *The Guardian*, Margaret Atwood notes that "[n]ovels that snitch character from other novels or stories and re-tell events from their point of view can give a reader the uneasy feeling that a previous author's work has been violated. Nonetheless, such books now constitute almost a separate genre." In an essay on *Doctor Glas* and *Gregorius*, Theresa Jamieson analyzes Bengt Ohlsson's re-vision of the earlier text within a post-colonial theoretical framework. She concludes that it "work[s] to restore or to reveal elements of the text's original narrative, which have often been overlooked in readings of the novel that prioritise its obvious engagement with sexual politics over its more subtle and searching engagement with ethics" (Jamieson 231). Reading *Gregorius* alongside *Doctor Glas* thus changes our understanding of the earlier text. Rather than "violating" its pre-text, Gregorius adds to the ethical discussion that takes place there. By staying very close to *Doctor Glas* in terms of character, style and setting, Ohlsson invites us to reconsider the original

text. Through his re-vision, Glas's narrative reliability is further challenged.

When resurrecting a century-old character, the question of style is sensitive. One reviewer of the Swedish edition described Ohlsson's language as "well written normal prose," being neither "archaic" nor too modern, with only a few instances of present-day Swedish (Sundström 2004). Ohlsson's main character must not sound too modern, particularly as his role as Glas's antagonist is to be the traditionalist as opposed to the modern doctor, who is not encumbered by the past either personally or in his philosophical outlook. Still, his tale must be enjoyable for a twenty-first-century reader.

The reader who is drawn to Söderberg because of his depictions of Stockholm will find familiar settings here. There are several detailed depictions of a Stockholm of the past, seen through the vicar's eyes this time. Ohlsson follows the original text closely in other respects as well, for example, the same time-frame is used as we encounter the vicar during the long, hot summer that will be his last. What information there is in the original narrative about the pastor's looks and behavior is meticulously put to use by Ohlsson, who even reconstructs authentic pieces of dialogue found in *Doctor Glas*.

In an interview in the Swedish daily newspaper *Aftonbladet*, Bengt Ohlsson says that *Gregorius* is a tribute to Söderberg's novel, which he keeps returning to and never tires of. The idea to write *Gregorius* came to him on one such occasion of re-reading *Doctor Glas*, when he felt he discovered a "crack" in the novel, as he says, allowing him a way into it.[23] What caught his attention was the dialogue between the pastor and the doctor in which Gregorius says he feels sorry for Helga, for they "had both so deeply hoped and longed for a little child" (Söderberg 26). Ohlsson's starting-point in *Gregorius* is that the pastor is sincere when is saying this. Here, Gregorius is, then, an aging man who keeps hoping he will not die childless.

Like Söderberg's Glas, Ohlsson's Gregorius is also an introspective man, who reasons with himself about his nature. Both narrators control their texts through the first-person perspective. Thus they tell us as much as they want, but they do not shy away from the more disagreeable aspects of their characters. In Ohlsson's text, the pastor is as uncomfortable in the doctor's presence as Söderberg's Glas is when meeting Gregorius. Still, he is able to show compassion and warmth, where Söderberg's Glas is skeptical and callous.

The doctor and the pastor remain incompatible, but despite mutual dislike Gregorius repeatedly expresses the wish for a better relationship with his physician. In a revealing passage, he muses: "There's so much I'd like to explain to him. Don't you understand, doctor, I want to say. There was only one single way to escape my loneliness, and it was her. I invested everything in her. Or, at least, as much as I could" (243). These lines hint at the depths of his loneliness and clarify his relationship with his wife. Gregorius acknowledges his own shortcomings, recognizing that he what he had to offer Helga perhaps was not enough (rather than giving her 'everything', he soberly corrects himself to say 'as much as I could'). Finally, he wants to develop a good rapport with the doctor, but is unable to reach out to another human being.

From the very first page of Ohlsson's text, it is clear that the pastor suspects that his wife is seeing somebody else and he is throughout depicted as a lonely man in search of love. Gregorius has made love his calling, yet the fear of love is a recurring motif:

> I've preached about love all my life. I've thought about it, analysed it from every possible angle and wrapped it in so many words that I lost sight of the actual substance of it long ago. …I've spoken endlessly about love, to avoid hearing how mute my own heart is. I've been particularly ready to pronounce on the problems and wrong turnings of love, and I've described fear of love as the greatest scourge of humanity, and the reason has of course always been, I now realise, that by this means I've been able to lull myself into believing that I myself is above this fear. How could I possibly be the victim of something I can describe so eloquently and with so much insight? Unfortunately, my dear Gregorius, says a voice, you should have understood, that it's precisely for this reason that fear is lodged more securely in you than in anyone else. (389)

It is noteworthy that Gregorius is here involved in a type of questioning of himself and his motives, which is similar to that of Glas contemplating the murder of Gregorius in Söderberg's text. The quoted passage indicates a certain amount of complacency in the priest's characterization of himself as someone who can describe love "eloquently and with so much insight" — a trait which the reader recognizes from Söderberg's depictions of Gregorius in *Doctor Glas* — but in the final lines the tone changes to one of merciless self-analysis. The quotation also serves as an illustration of the topic of love in Gregorius's narrative. While both men — Söderberg's Glas as well as Ohlsson's Gregorius — fear love, only the latter acknowledges this fear. The pastor's self-searching brings to light similar truths as that of the doctor, but their strategies for dealing with these truths are markedly dissimilar. Gregorius's story elucidates concerns that Glas's narrative obscures; the pastor seeks transparency on issues the doctor prefers to cloak in darkness and repression.

The close affinity between Söderberg's and Ohlsson's texts that is suggested has a bearing on the ethical implications of *Gregorius* as well. By modeling his work so closely on its pre-text, Ohlsson offers an alternative to the rhetorical strategies of Doctor Glas. In the process, he sheds light on how to resolve the effects of evil.

John Kekes tries to answer the question of what can be done about evil in two very specific ways. He asserts that a society needs "strong prohibitions of evil actions" (239). This amounts to a fairly straightforward invocation of rules and regulations, as well as punishment. In addition, he suggests that evil needs to be fought not only legally, but also through our powers of imagination. As a strategy for dealing with evil, we should cultivate our "moral imagination," which is "the attempt to appreciate other ways of life by coming to understand them from the inside as they appear to those who are actively involved in them" (Kekes 236). What he suggests here is that the evildoer often does not know or fully understand his opponent, and that if we could only reach such an understanding the need to do evil would be re-

duced.

The novel *Gregorius* illustrates the idea of "moral imagination." By making the pastor narrator of his own story, Bengt Ohlsson attempts to give us an inside understanding of the life of the unfortunate pastor. Söderberg's Gregorius, as well as his wife Helga, are flat characters, which is a prerequisite for the development of the events in the earlier text, at least if we agree with Kekes that the evildoer does not know or fully understand his opponent. To Dr. Glas, Gregorius is a pompous, hypocritical man who rapes his wife under the pretext of exercising his conjugal rights. Making Gregorius the subject of his own narrative, Ohlsson explores what might have made the parson into the man he has become.

In the Afterword to the English edition of *Gregorius*, Bengt Ohlsson offers the following explanation for how one becomes a murderer: "you have to ensure a certain distance from the victim. You must see to it that the victim appears different, a different kind of human being. Then you must make him a little less human than the rest of us" (421). He goes on to say that this is what the Nazis did when they occupied Holland during World War II. Bit by bit they deprived the Jews of their rights, and through this process of gradual de-humanization and objectification, they became seen as different. Ohlsson concludes, "Finally it must have seemed logical to the Dutch that their Jewish neighbours should be packed into lorries and taken away. Dr Glas uses exactly the same methods" (421). What Ohlsson does then is instead to gradually "humanize" the objectified Gregorius. Gregorius's narrative thus works to "restore and reveal" elements of Söderberg's novel. The two texts are engaged in a dialogue in which each work sheds light upon the other. Together, they will continue to fascinate readers and give us a deeper understanding of the important issues they raise.

Notes

1. It should be mentioned that three other novels relating to Hjalmar Söderberg's *Doctor Glas* have been published recently: Dannie Abse's *The Strange Case of Dr Simmonds and Dr Glas* (2002); and in Swedish Birgitta Lindén's *Jag, Helga Gregorius* (2008), and Kerstin Ekman's *Brottets praktik* (2009).
2. See Staffan Eklund, "Ekman går i närkamp med *Doktor Glas.*" *Svenska Dagbladet*, 29 Aug 2009.
3. In the introduction to the Swedish 2011 edition of *Doktor Glas*, Kerstin Ekman observes that the Stockholm Söderberg describes is a "world of glass" with none of the filth, noise, or smells of the growing modern capital (Ekman *x-xi*).
4. See Bure Holmbäck, *Hjalmar Söderbergs Stockholm*: 10.
5. See Bure Holmbäck, *Hjalmar Söderbergs Stockholm*: 20.
6. See Björn Sundberg, *Sanningen, myterna och intressenas spel. En studie i Hjalmar Söderbergs författarskap från och med* Hjärtats oro (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet; Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1981): 138.
7. See Holmbäck, *Hjalmar Söderberg: ett författarliv* 248–49.
8. See Eva Akinvall Franke, *Eko av Glas: Läsningar genom ett sekel av Hjalmar Söderbergs verk Doktor Glas: En receptionsestetiskt orienterad studie* (University of Borås, 2004): 70.

9. Paul Britten Austin is the translator of the two English versions of *Doctor Glas* that were published in 1963 and 2002. There is also an American translation from 1998, by Rochelle Wright.
10. See Ann Heberlein, *En liten bok om ondska* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 2010) 11-14.
11. See Ann Heberlein 111.
12. See Lars O. Lundgren, *Liv, jag förstår dig inte. Hjalmar Söderberg's Doktor Glas* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 1987) 18-19. In addition, Tom Geddes observes the presence of "narrative irony" in all of Söderberg's work — another reason for the reader to carefully consider the role of the narrator. See Geddes 112.
13. See Heberlein 41.
14. Interestingly, the connection between repression and evil is echoed by John Lloyd in an article on the contemporary crime novels of Scandinavian *noir* in the *Financial Times* last year. Lloyd discusses the "leftist" bent of Swedish crime writers and how their disappointment with the welfare state has led them to depict the repressed darker side of our modern society, manifested through racism, misogyny, and violence.
15. In his desire to act, Holmbäck sees Glas as a Nietzschean *übermensch*, full of will, until the deed is done. Then he sinks into apathy and resignation and begins to refer to chance and biological determinism as an explanation for what he has just done. For more information about the conflict between men of action and thinkers, or philosophers, see Sundberg 141-58.
16. See George C. Schoolfield, "Review of *Doctor Glas* by Hjalmar Söderberg", *Scandinavian Studies* 71. 4 (1999): 493-495.
17. See Miki Agerberg, *Bakom vansinnet. Forskare om psyke, våld och rädsla* (Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet, 2007) 55.
18. See Lundgren 66.
19. See Holmbäck, *Det lekfulla allvaret* 245.
20. More information about Söderberg and religion can be found in for example, Sven Lagerstedt's *Söderberg och religionen* (1982), Lars Ljungberg's *Alltför mänskligt. Om Hjalmar Söderberg's kristendomskritik* (1982), and Elena Balzamo *Den engagerade skeptikern. Hjalmar Söderberg och politiken* (2001). See also Söderberg's novels *Jahves eld* (*Yahweh's Fire* 1918), *Jesus Barabbas* (1928) and *Den förvandlade Messias* (*The Transformed Messiah* 1932).
21. Theresa Jamieson notes that at the end of the 19th century this distinction was sometimes blurred as physicians were increasingly granted the right to "treat diseases of both body and mind" (Jamieson 229).
22. The post-colonial thrust of this idea to bring a character from the margins of a pre-text to the center of a re-vision of this text is explored by Theresa Jamieson.
23. See Ingalill Mosander, "Det gällde att härda ut—att inte ta livet av sig." *Aftonbladet* 24 Oct 2004.

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The Image as a Site of Aesthetic Renegotiation in Kerstin Ekman's *City of Light*

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Abstract This article is a study of the novel *City of Light* (1983) by the Swedish author Kerstin Ekman. The novel features a friction between image and text that is expressed in an attempt to recreate in novelistic form the spatial properties inherent in images. The temporal flow of the narrative is interrupted by retakes and repetitions as it endeavours to illustrate a complex "now" by letting preamble and epilogue inhabit the same temporal position. The novel also strives to supply alternatives to a stereotypical tradition of images of women. The opposition between spatiality and temporality is mirrored, for example, in the way the novel takes to task the representation of woman in Western philosophy. By scrutinizing the relationship between image and text, its ideological connotations are deconstructed, which allows the narrator to make peace not only with her own body but also open herself to other human beings. *City of Light* is permeated by the tension that W. J. T. Mitchell maintains is a characteristic of the present, that is, the simultaneous suspicion and admiration of the visual power of pictorial media. Ekman's writing explores the relationship between verbal and visual art and simultaneously tests their ideological powers of signification.
Key words Kerstin Ekman; *City of Light*; image and text; ekphrasis; Rune Hagberg

> Time & Space are Real Beings
> Time is a Man Space is a Woman
> —"A Vision of the Last Judgement" by William Blake

Kerstin Ekman (b. 1933), considered one of Sweden's most important, experimental and original authors of the twentieth century, made her literary debut with the detective story 30 *Meters of Murder* (1959). Following a decade of writing criminal fiction, Ekman has continuously moved between genres such as documentary fiction, prose poems, historical narratives as well as postmodern experimental fiction. Ekman's novels are often realistic depictions of our time and share the element of social critique at the same time as they resound with mythological undertones. Another characteristic of Ekman's *oeuvre* is its multifaceted relation to a literary tradition, which is simultaneously incorporated and challenged. In addition to a large number of novels in various genres, Kerstin Ekman has also produced films, written film scripts, programmed

a computer game, as well as worked with digital hypertext. The interplay with other media such as paintings, photography, film and digital narratives is an important building block of Ekman's fiction.[1]

Image Construction —Image Destruction

In 1974 the first novel in the tetralogy, sometimes referred to as *The Katrineholm's Suite*, *Witches Rings*, was published. This narrative about the birth and development of a Swedish city from the middle of the nineteenth century and onwards, continues in *The Spring* (1976) and *The Angel House* (1979). In the final book of the series, *City of Light* (1983), the epic and linear narrative structure of the former books has been replaced by a narrative structure that is based on other temporal qualities such as repetition, returns, fragmentation, circularity and immediacy. *City of Light* orchestrates a movement away from the novel as a trustworthy description of reality, and focuses instead on narrative problems and possibilities. Another way of describing it is as movement from realism to modernism (Wright 1 – 27). *City of Light* is the final part of *The Katrineholm's Suite* and has thus, with good reason, been looked upon as a conclusion. But, it also shapes the beginning of a new orientation; Ekman initiates a more critical and theoretically inclined phase of her literary career. The novel's themes are configured in a tension between word and image, which in Ekman's work incorporates ideological values bound up with aesthetics, culture and gender. In *City of Light* it takes the form of a critical re-evaluation of dichotomous concepts previously taken for granted, including reality-fiction, image-text, nature-culture, man-woman and man-animal. This new direction continues and appears in different forms in subsequent novels such as *Blackwater* (1993) and *Revive-Me* (1996).

Two pictures emerge in *The Katrineholm's Suite*. In *Witches Rings* a photograph that is taken on a market day in a Swedish city the year 1876 is described:

> There is a picture of Edla.
>
> But how to describe a face? Is it thin or broad? Are the eyes deep set, and is the mouth unusually small or just tightly shut? The more familiar it seems, the more difficult it becomes to describe. You recall it as if in a dream and afterwards you couldn't possibly say what it looked like. Still, the expression on a face is the true message it reveals, and it remains.
>
> Edla's face, the face of the thirteen-year-old with brushed-back tightly clasped hair, wears a solemn expression. [...]
>
> A photographer from Stockholm had posted a sign offering people's photographic portraits for only half what it cost in the capital. Lans took his daughter Edla there to have her picture taken. Her mother, who didn't have the clothes to wear to market, had stayed at home and so she couldn't stop him.
>
> The photograph of Edla has faded and yellowed now and her face is blurred. What shows most clearly is the plaid pattern of her dress. But her solemn expression remains. (Ekman *Witches' Rings* 21 – 22)

The picture of the thirteen-year-old maid Edla, who is raped and dies giving birth,

recurs on several occasions in *Witches Rings*. For Tora Otter, who is Edla's daughter, this photograph is her sole memento of her mother. It is nearly destroyed in a fire and Tora feels as if she again is losing the mother she has never met. The photograph functions as a trustworthy representation and an opening to the past.

In *City of Light*, that takes place a century later, another picture appears. The protagonist, Ann-Marie who is Tora Otter's foster-grandchild, has an adopted daughter, Elisabeth, who has disappeared. When Ann-Marie is waiting for Elisabeth's return she is looking at a photograph of her daughter. But she does not like it: "It was as if she had been nowhere and asked someone to take this snapshot that arrived here in my hands out of nowhere" (76).[2] So she cuts out the figure of Elisabeth, puts it in a flower pot, arranges the leaves of the plant, color the edges of the photograph so that they no longer are white, before she again takes a photograph of her arrangement: "The shadows had to fall just right, so it wouldn't look like I had simply photographed a flat picture. I was very happy to have achieved that picture of a moment that had never been but that I had still managed to capture" (77). Ann-Marie's relation to the photograph is not the same as Tora's. For Ann-Marie the photograph does not bring the past to the present, so she cuts in it to create something that feels alive. The flat surface of the photograph is associated with something that is inanimate and circumscribed — similar to what Roland Barthes in his well-known book *Camera Lucida* (1980) has called "the flat death" of photography (Barthes 92). According to Barthes the photographic moment transforms a subject into an object whom then undergoes a "micro-version of death: [he is] truly becoming a specter [...] Death in person" (Barthes 14). Further, Ekman's work can be read in the light of the pictorial turn that W. J. T. Mitchell describes in *Picture Theory* (1994). The postmodern information society is imbued with images of various kinds, above all in printed media, television, video, computers and the Internet. According to Mitchell, there is a paradox in the fact that the latter part of the 1900s can be described from the perspective of this turn. On the one hand, it is evident that information technology has created, among other things, new visual representations, simulations and illusions. On the other, the fear of the image, as fraught with danger and even potent enough to destroy its maker, has a long history. Idolatry, iconoclasm and fetishism are, as we know, not postmodernist phenomena (Mitchell *Picture Theory* 15). This paradox — the profusion of new, visual, impressions in parallel with dread and suspicion of the medium — permeates also Kerstin Ekman's writing.

In *The Katrineholm's Suite* a century of technological development lies between the two women's different interpretations of the photographic image. Whereas Tora is doing everything to keep the photograph and the memory of her mother intact, Ann-Marie destroys the image to create something new out of the fragments. The tension between confidence in the image and rejection of the image works as a site of renegotiation of aesthetic, cultural and intellectual conceptions. The ambivalence towards the image reveals itself partly in a deconstructive practice where the images of tradition have to be destroyed, and partly in a constructive practice where the fragmented images create new, but not always truer, images. Ekman's ambivalence towards the image is very complex and raises the question of whether it is possible to interpret and

understand the past and the contemporary. This oscillation between image construction and image destruction is, as will be discussed below, prominent in *City of Light*.

Spatial Form

City of Light is a first-person narrative that takes place in the city and in a world of light that emerges in the revelations that Ann-Marie, the narrator, experiences. The novel is about the woman called Ann-Marie, whom through flashbacks the reader follows from early childhood to middle age. When the novel opens, Ann-Marie has returned from Portugal to sell her father's house. Upon returning to the house at Number 13 Chapel Road, she receives the message that her daughter Elisabeth has disappeared. Ann-Marie has to postpone the selling of the house, and during the time that she waits for Elisabeth's return she makes an inventory of her own life. We learn about Ann-Marie's childhood and adolescence: that her mother Lisa was not present, that she grew up with her alcoholic father and with foster parents. She moves to Uppsala to study at the university but fails to keep up with her studies, returns to Chapel Road 13 and is employed at the local newspaper. She falls in love with her much older colleague, Victor, but marries her childhood friend Hasse. The couple move to Portugal and adopts Elisabeth. Ann-Marie's father, Henning, dies, Elisabeth grows up, disappears, returns and gives birth to a child. This account of *City of Light* suggests that it is a story told in a straightforward manner. However, it has a very complex narrative structure, and the novel is fragmentary and full of contradictions. For Ann-Marie, the past is fragmentary and elusive and the narrative structure is as variable as her memory is.

City of Light establishes a fundamental tension between image and text that works on several levels. One such level is Ann-Marie's revelations. Early in the story, Ann-Marie seeks refuge in a land called Choryn, which is synonymous with entering an image. It is difficult for her to recreate her past. She tries to remember by studying photographs, even manipulating them to create her own image. Although Ann-Marie destroys the photograph of her daughter early in the story, the image is presented as more stable than the text. Writing is most painful for Ann-Marie, and is contrasted to the feeling of wholeness that she experiences when she "stepped forth from [a] bath of images" (293) in Choryn. However, in the end, it is writing that will set her free and she moulds herself into a "body of words" (472). I will return to these aspects below.

On a formal level, *City of Light* features a friction between image and text that is manifested in the attempt to recreate in novelistic form the spatial properties inherent in images.[3] The temporal flow of the narrative is constantly interrupted by retakes and repetitions. For example, when Ann-Marie tries to remember her father's death she begins to describe it but stops when it becomes too painful. The reader is then caught in the passage that describes how her father died, and it is not until several pages and restarts later that the course of events is completed. Continually, the narrative stems, circulates and returns to different episodes and such repetitive narration hinders singulative ("narrating once what happened once") narrative structure (Genette 114).[4] Also, the narrative is highly analeptic, which means that the text alludes to itself and

thus creates a code of doubling since the narrative refers to the story with anachronies within the superordinate analepsis (Genette 40).[5] The anachronies then stand in a relation to each other in different degrees of subordination. This means that they can become very complex and in *City of Light* they continually disrupt the linear movement of time.

However, the most important feature of the novel's spatial form is that it endeavours to illustrate a complex "now" by letting preamble and epilogue inhabit the same temporal position. The novel begins when Ann-Marie in the present tense says that she is in "the canopy of the linden and it is in bloom" (12). We then follow her in a downward movement that is described as a birth into the city: "down in gravel and iron at the bottom of a pit" (12). The first two pages are narrated in the present tense, but it is not until almost five hundred pages later that the same present tense again becomes the dominating mode. In the preamble, it is late summer, and in the epilogue "it's still summer" (461). Ann-Marie says that she "was in the treetops not very long ago, and the city was no more than bits of iron and gravel at the bottom of a pit" (461). Ann-Marie's description of how she was recently in the treetops- in a reference to the preamble — soon enters a temporal succession when she says that "it 's still summer" (461). The epilogue confirms temporality, and the spatial elements that previously hindered temporal successive movement are now released. Time is presented as moving — not cyclically — but temporally and the discrepancy between story and narrative is dissolved; they are now synchronous. The employment of this narrative technique may be derived from Ekman's use of a variety of images as her constructive bedrock, but also from her positing of the image as the point of departure for a critique of her time and of representation.

Naturally, spatial form is not unique for *City of Light*. Joseph Frank, in his well-known essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945), argues that spatial form is quintessential to modernist literature. The reader thus apprehends the textual elements spatially, in an idealised moment, instead of moving along with the temporal flow of the narrative. Frank writes: "[P]ast and present are seen spatially, locked in a timeless unity which, while it may accentuate surface differences, eliminates any feeling of historical sequence by the very act of juxtaposition" (Frank 225). In modernist literature (James Joyce, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot), story and narrative are replaced by mythical simultaneity that hinders the temporal flow.[6] It is obvious that Ekman's novel experiments with a similar interest in simultaneity as an aesthetic device; *City of Light* also presents an alternative to this type of narrative technique.

The Escape to and from the Image

The tension between spatiality and temporality on a formal level corresponds to themythical revelations that Ann-Marie experiences as a child, teenager, and grown up woman. She describes three different occasions when a goddess called Ishnol has manifested herself and taken her out of time. On every occasion, something dramatic has happened and the revelations are associated with Ann-Marie's breakdowns and deep depressions. Naturally, these visions could be read as mental breakdowns, but they are also significant passages that comprise a meta-aesthetic discussion about the

relation between image, word and representation.

When Ishnol and the dancing figure Wonda manifest themselves, Ann-Marie experiences another realm that she calls Choryn. Afterwards she "is liberated from all smells" and "all sounds were distant as well" (169). For the young girl, Ishnol and Choryn represent an escape from a turbulent and difficult life. However, after moments of fulfilment in Choryn, Ann-Marie always ends up in Karun – which represents the life she leads as a motherless girl and with a father who is an alcoholic. The ontological boundary between the two worlds is absolute, and Ann-Marie seeks out the other world that is characterised by light and stability. Ishnol has been interpreted in different ways, such as the Sumerian goddess Inanna and the Egyptian goddess Ishtar, while others have argued that there are no connections between those myths and Ishnol (Schottenius 123 – 149; Wright 1 – 27). I would argue that Ishnol could be interpreted as an image or idol that has to be destroyed in order for Ann-Marie to be able to break free from her isolated existence.

The second revelation occurs when Ann-Marie is a teenager. It is associated with her suicidal attempts and permeated with images of death and destruction. The course of time initiates an awareness and presence of death depicted through negations:

> When I opened my eyes I was looking into the round, uninformed face of the clock. It had been one and it was un-one, the only fathomable thing about it. The factory whistle sounded and un-sounded. The clicking followed me into the darkness, little recurrences I could lie and anticipate. Not recurrences of the same thing, but of roughly similar things that would fill me with desire, fool me into thinking they were Exactly the Same Thing. But they weren't. The clicking sounds followed me now like a little troupe, they would stick with me now, for sure. Eyes closed, I expected the recurrences, but they were being diluted with something inconceivable, and they grew farther and farther apart, more and more irregular, and eventually they were gone. (292 – 293)

The image of the clock and its variations function as a symbol of negativity and nothingness. The clock "had been one and it was un-one", the oppositions neutralize each other and the only thing that is certain is *nothing*. A wide-ranging literary tradition uses the negation to formulate a deep scepticism of modernity and secularity, but here the topos of nothingness is driven to its extreme in Ann-Marie's longing for annihilation and to be taken "out of time". In *City of Light*, the negation stands for a *via negativa*, how the notion of God can only be expressed through negations, but it also represents spatiality in the sense of an image where everything is still. Ekman's use of the negation can be compared with the Swedish poet Edith Södergran. Södergran's poem "Nothingess" is quoted in *City of Light*; it has been described by Anders Olsson as "a portal to the line of negation in modern Swedish poetry" (Olsson 241). Even though Ann-Marie feels as if she is stuck in the treadmill of time, she experiences moments of relief when Ishnol takes her out of time. On one occasion, this is expressed in an allusion to another poem by Södergran, "Landet som icke är" (1925, "The Land which is not"):

> Everything had its place inside me now. Apparently this country that was not a country had been spreading inside me for a long time. Like a map on stretched parchment it was there on the inside of my skin, where the blood vessels outlined rivers and winding tracks I could follow if I had the time and patience, fragments of paths, never properly trampled, only just begun. Brook-threads, thin, splintered arteries seeking a sea or a lake beyond the map. (290)

The land can only be described through negations; Södergran's poem indicates a relation that cannot be named. The longing is directed towards a state of "non-being" that exists in the land that cannot be reached. In the passage above, the body is described as a mirror of the world; this is an expression of how the transcendence has started to level out. The description of the body indicates a longing for the dissolving of boundaries, and it is particularly clear that the inward projection towards "the fetal hiding place of [her] soul" (126), eventually is changing towards an outward projection where the body consists of "(b)rook-threads, thin, splintered arteries seeking a sea or a lake beyond the map" (290). However, the flow of the water is still too weak and the barrages have not yet burst. The inward projection of Ann-Marie, expressed through a resilient longing for something outside of life, will eventually be turned towards life and an acceptance of her own body and "the springs that have been blocked will burst forth with great force" (435). From the impasse of negativity something new is created, and on a meta-aesthetic level this is expressed with a shifting from image to text.

By comparing the revelations, a difference in attitude towards Ishnol emerges. For the child, Ishnol and the land of Choryn are places of refuge; for the teenager, the perspective has shifted – it is the notions of time and body that are central. The middle-aged Ann-Marie is clearly ambivalent towards Ishnol. The last time that Ishnol reveals herself is when Ann-Marie's daughter has disappeared; as a consequence, she falls into deep depression. Now, the border between Choryn and Karun is dissolving, or, in other words, the transcendence as an oriented movement towards another sphere has been dissolved. When Ishnol manifests herself, the border between ontologies is not as definitive as before; Ann-Marie is not certain whether Ishnol has "stepped out of the dimension into the world, or if I had been shifted instead" (107). In an erotically charged image, Ann-Marie is elevated by a warm swell to a state of perfection. This passage describes different transformations that Ann-Marie experiences in the limbo between Choryn and Karun. Finally, Ann-Marie hears "the familiar rattling of the Paraphernalia" and realises that Ishnol has sent the "Bewilderer"; he wants to show his wand: "The wand! I didn't want to see his old wand. Grinning, he held it straight out so it was pointing at me. Would I be so kind as to measure it?" (120). Naturally, the wand is a phallic symbol and mirrors the tool that make writing possible: the pen. The Bewilderer soon disappears, but then the so called Garbles approach her and they want to "Play Games" (123): "They let me choose between Stone and Sky, between Time and Space and between Sun and Earth, but whatever choice I make they laugh and say it was wrong" (123). The ep-

isode that follows the Game Play, with its allusion to the Icarus motif, is an attempt to convert the wand to a pen with which to gain power over the body:

> [T]hen they take hold of my body and beg me to tell them if I am Fish or Fowl, Fly or Butterfly. When I say Fly! they pull off first one of my wings and then the other shouting: Fly now, then! And I have to trip out onto the Slab in my pain, they force me forward, I cannot take off and I must not fall. Then they tear off my legs shouting: run, then carrion! and I creep on my stomach and they laugh at this monstrosity that is neither Fly nor Fish but only pain and weight. (123)

Ann-Marieh as fallen down. She is heavy and full of pain when the Garbles exclaim:

> "She is a Book!" they shout, and bend me back and start turning my pages. They turn past the first few pages, exposing my stinging membranes and I scream out in fear because I know they can hurt me.
>
> "Now we're going to read you," they yell, quite distracted with glee, laughing, "now we'll read all your secrets!"
>
> They turn more and more pages but find nothing, and they drive their earth-covered fingers into me saying: "Nothing! There's nothing here. Nothing but emptiness!" (123)

Eventually, Ann-Marie becomes a book — but not for long. The Garbles get tired of the Book-Game and let her go. Then the Bewilderer returns. But this time it is not the wand that attracts Ann-Marie's attention but an abscess on his forehead, a "carbuncle that shone brighter and clearer for every moment":

> Then the boil burst. In a stream of blood-colored water and pus, a little fetus was rinsed out. It moved feebly, was a sickly yellow color and its tiny extremities lay curled into the body as if it had cramps. It was an odious child, nothing but hair and teeth and flesh. I could see that it was unfit for life, that it was bringing nothing but contagion with it into the world and I wondered if I would be given the task of killing it. I sensed, in spite of the frailty of the little body, that it would not be easy. There was a diseased and dogged force in the compact limbs of this child, and under its tightly shut eyelids. At that moment, Ishnol crossed the dimension forcefully and her voice called out, as if from within a bell of incandescent ice:
>
> "You who have seen yourself been born, now rest!" (124 - 125)

The carbuncle motif has its roots in Antiquity; during the Middle Ages it was connected with the blood of Christ. Later, from the 19th century and onwards, according to Gunnar D. Hansson, it has been associated with a double nature that comprises "mythical devotedness *and* inflamed inflatedness" (Hansson 319). The carbuncle motif has consistently been associated with *lux et vita*, with light and life that emerges from the inside, and is here transformed from a gem to a helpless fetus, allegorising

the vulnerable or degraded human being. For Ann-Marie, Ishnol is light and hardness. She is described as a gem that "in her crystalline forms [breaks] through the greasy dirt of Karun" and that she "is made of heavy crystals, her waist is calcite and indestructible, it divides and the split is perfect; a new rhombohedral Ishnol sparkles, hard as glass" (110). When Ann-Marie expects to see the birth of a gem, she thinks that, as Ishnol's "little Chip" she will be included in Ishnol's heavy crystals. Instead, she sees herself being born as a helpless fetus. The transformation of the carbuncle motif in the passage above constitutes the beginning of Ann-Marie's identification with other human beings rather than with the idol/image of Ishnol. The earlier discussion about the change in narrative technique from circular/spatial to temporal parallels the change in attitude towards the revelations that Ann-Marie experiences. When she no longer wants to be taken out of time, or in other words, when transcending to a "bath of images" (293) in Choryn is no longer desirable, the progression of narrative time is resumed.

The Image of the Female Body

In aesthetics, the relation between spatially organized art forms such as visual art, painting and sculpture, and temporal art forms such as music and literature, has been much discussed.[7] In the famous *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766), which treats the inter-relations of poetry and painting, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing claims that the two forms are diametrically opposed in so far as they are two media tied to different dimensions: the text to time and the image to space. Lessing's *Laokoon* constitutes a rejoinder to his contemporary theorists who either wanted to place word art and visual art in the same category or make them interchangeable. However, in *Laokoon*, Lessing instead gives prominence to the distinction between visual art and poetry. Painting (which to Lessing embraces the visual arts in general terms) does not use the same kind of signs or expressive means as poetry since the former uses forms and colours in space, and the latter combines sounds/tones in temporal sequences (Lessing 114). With *Laokoon*, Lessing pleads the purity of the arts; poetry should use temporal signs whereas visual art should use spatial signs (Lessing 114). According to Mitchell, words and images are not static and eternal categories; they are constructed and gain meaning in relation to historical and cultural processes of change. There is no immanent difference between word and image. Mitchell emphasizes the importance of historicizing. He also states that the relation between word and image contains ideological, and often gendered, dimensions connected to other binaries such as time and space, male and female, culture and nature, soul and body, and internal and external. Mitchell bases his arguments upon the philosophy of among others G. E. Lessing and Edmund Burke when he states, for example, that: "paintings like women, are ideally silent, beautiful creatures designated for the gratification of the eye, in contrast to the sublime eloquence proper to the manly art of poetry" (Mitchell *Iconology*, *Image* 110). Instead, Mitchell proposes that we study the *relations* between different forms of art and, to make doubly sure, view these as constituting an ideologically tainted *power struggle* between word and image. This tension or struggle between word and image is fundamental in *City of Light*, where Kerstin Ek-

man explores the relationship between word and image and simultaneously tests their gendered, ideological powers of signification. This is a particularly significant in terms of the representation of the body in *City of Light*.

The dualism that characterises the relation between Choryn and Karun corresponds to the way that Ann-Marie describes her body. When she experiences her visions mind and body are described as strictly separate, and the desire for Choryn also involves a desire to leave the physical body behind. She wants to have a mind or soul rather than a child: "It frightened me. I wanted to have a soul. I wanted to have a soul more than I wanted to have a baby" (316). Further, the earth is described as a female life-giving principle strongly associated with reproduction. Similarly, Ann-Marie describes her body as a "sludgy riverbed full of little animals that had burrowed down into me and sometimes moved around, trying to dig even deeper" (292). Historically, the notion of woman has been connected to physicality and nature, aspects that are typical of biological features such as reproduction and giving birth. These are widely recognised cultural concepts in Western philosophy, art and literature; they have not only created woman as the other but also generated an image of her that is closely connected to place, spatiality and circularity rather than to movement and progression.[8] The connection between woman and earth also alludes to the portrayal of woman as a passive vessel that only waits to be filled with new life. Almost a truism by now, the notion of woman as a vessel that passively takes part in reproduction is a recognised image in Western literature and art (Ortner). Ann-Marie reproduces this as she talks about herself in the third person, describing her body as a vessel, only useful for food processing:

> She [Robor] is one long skin, a casing of flesh held up by bones as tightly set as the stays in a corset. She encloses a tube into which nourishment goes down and comes out again; she is that tube. I was Robor and felt the sluggish mass pass through me with heavy, jarring movements. Day after day I was given over to this process; I was nothing but a container for it. (128)

The body is sharply separated from the mind and described as a fence from which she observes the world. Ann-Marie's teeth are described as a confining fence and the body is the "slack sack" (126) that forces her to live in Karun, when all she wants is to transcend to Choryn where "no rotting remains can adhere" (125). By talking about herself in the third person, the gaze also internalises the objectification which could be described as a double gaze that looks at the body from the outside and it from the narrating I. The body is described as grotesque as the narrator emphasises reproduction, food, the stomach and genitals. The open body, such as it is described by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World*, comprises a power that recognises the possibility of modifying the bounds of possibility and freeing oneself from limiting norms (Bacthin). But no such relief is offered in *City of Light*. The leaking body that transgresses boundaries is rather a sign of social weakness and unrestrained conduct, and is ridden with anxiety for Ann-Marie. Instead of being a subversive strategy, the grotesque charges the representation of the female body with death.

At the same time as Choryn is no longer an option for Ann-Marie, the discrepancy between story and narrative is equated and the novel ends with the present tense as the dominating mode. At the same time as the image and spatiality are abandoned, Ann-Marie picks up the pen and formulates her own identity by writing it down.

> I stay at the kitchen table. There is no one here but me. It's only me and the paper, the point of the pen, the ink. I am changing. With every word I undergo a shift. An alphabet is creeping up out of me, moving across the paper like little creatures at the bottom of a stream. I creep up out of an alphabet; all of me is flux, reflexes on a bed of sand, the shifting of the water and the flashes of light are me. The pen point drives me.
>
> I drive the handwriting into the paper. No, the ink drives me like rain, like a brushfire across the pages. It leaves writing in me, tracks in my flesh, scars full of ink. It's only me, only the pen point moving. Writing. (13)

Ann-Marie describes herself as being born from an alphabet and at the same time she gives birth to a written text. Through writing, she defines and takes charge of her body and identity. In the novel, writing corresponds to the progression of time; it has been most painful for Ann-Marie to renounce the spatial and solipsistic qualities of Choryn for the temporality of life in Karun. We have seen that the conquering of the pen, represented as a phallic symbol, was a deeply painful process. But, simultaneously as her body is born by writing it, it is released from patriarchal determinations:

> I have nothing, not even hair and teeth. I am hair, teeth, blood. I do not have a soul. I am possessed, pervaded, illumined. Through me courses water I am unable to retain. I am not a vessel. I move through the world; the world moves through me. (403)

It is neither the vessel nor "the great mother" that is the solution for Ann-Marie, as some critics have argued (Schottenius 327). She has written herself out of that determination and transgresses the boundaries put by a Western tradition of philosophy and literature, where woman has been described as a biological creature without a soul.[9] Ann-Marie's body is a construction in and out of language but, and this is essential in Ekman's *oeuvre*, it is also physically situated; Ann-Marie's creeping in and out of an alphabet leaves writing in her as tracks in her flesh and scars full of ink.

Ekphrasis: the Verbal Description of a Visual Object

The concept of *ekphrasis* exists at the intersection of image and text and Heffernan, who has worked out a now well-established definition: "[E]kphrasis *is the verbal representation of visual representation*", describes it as a site of "struggle" between verbal and visual art forms, a paragonal dimension that has informed contemporary literary and aesthetic theory and expose ideological as well as epistemological workings (Heffernan 3).[10] Central to *City of Light* are the white boxes made by The Whitepainter —a prominent character in the novel. He lives in the same house as Ann-Ma-

rie, who is very sceptical towards him and the other so-called "character" that live there. But eventually The Whitepainter will play a significant part in Ann-Marie's life. Mikael, which is his real name, makes white, sealed wooden boxes.

> Most of the works were things he had made. Oblong boxes reminiscent of coffins but not large enough to hold more than a forearm. He still makes those boxes, always sealing them with white string. No one knows what they contain. Some of them slosh a bit, or rattle like sand or whisper as if balled-up paper were rolling around in them. But some are silent, and they will all be silent one day, anyway, when whatever it is in them has shrivelled up and been disintegrated. [...] The mummies or chrysalises in the oblong boxes are idols that can not be invoked. There is no way to know what is in them; the germ of life or a trivial joke. Fragments of words from newspapers. Or just a stain. The seed of physical or mental illness. Or nothing. The whole secret: nothing (401).

The Whitepainter's boxes are *ekphrases* of the monochrome sculptures of the Swedish artist Rune Hagberg (b. 1924).[11] In 1978, Kerstin Ekman and Rune Hagberg contributed to a series of articles published in the Swedish journal *Expressen* with the theme of "Word as image, image as poem". It was here that Kerstin Ekman's poem "This is the sign for wood and water", originally a private and poetic letter to Rune Hagberg, was published. The same year, a handwritten copy of the poem was exhibited together with Rune Hagberg's art at Gallerie AIX in Stockholm. Early in his career Hagberg studied eastern calligraphy and it was his experiments with the brushes that he made himself that eventually developed into a simple monochrome style of a few easy strokes of the brush. During the 1950's, Hagberg started to scratch on the surface of his white paintings, resulting in openings and ruptures. In a documentary film, Hagberg describes how the image strives forward out into the room and becomes three-dimensional.[12] This practice is what will eventually result in the white monochrome objects that he made during the 1980's. Kerstin Ekman writes about this technique in her poem:

> Chang Seng Yu created signs on rice paper / the indian ink flew with great power / with courage and presence inside his body / each stroke was lined by the rigid sable's hair [...] He flayed the skin of the paper / and drew in its unsavoury flesh / in the membrane of the paper.[13]

The poet equates paper and flesh, but if the reader cannot feel the stroke of the brush in her flesh, he ties his paper together and says: "these are my signs / you cannot see them." The poem establishes a link between artwork and body by way of the Indian ink that flows on the paper as well as in the artist's blood. The same connection between paper and flesh is made by the protagonist in *City of Light*: "I drive the handwriting into the paper. No, the ink drives me like rain, like a brushfire across the pages. It leaves writing in me, tracks in my flesh, scars full of ink" (13). For a long time, the protagonist of *City of Light* lives in a visual world that is permeated

with a gnostic denial of the physical body. This is something that the novel tries to dissolve, establishing instead a confirmation of body, flesh and physical touch. The trajectory from body to soul and back again moves along a *via negativa* where the negations carry Ann-Marie's longing for transcendence, that is to rise above the body. This negative aspect and the apophatic teology characterises Rune Hagberg's aesthetic, which he has described as an "apophatic attitude". Kerstin Ekman's oeuvre reflects a similar apophatic attitude and concept of God — it can only be described through negations and where God, from a linguistic point of view cannot be named or determined. However, in *City of Light* it is not an absent god that is invoked. It is other human beings. That Ann-Marie has finally replaced Ishnol with other human beings is conveyed through descriptions of how hands meet skin to skin, for example, when Ann-Marie sits beside her dying friend Ann-Sofie and she puts her hand over hers, and of how the White painter literally — with the help of his own body — brings Ann-Marie back from her existence in Choryn:

> He [The White Painter] tormented med with his returnings and in the end he had sunk me so low by constantly forcing me to combat his presence that I was lying in Robor's body once again. […]
>
> He sat on the edge of my bed so close I was unable to take in his entire body at once and he took my hand and raised it to his chest.
>
> "Feel," he said.
>
> And I felt the skin of my fingers the soft matted covering on his chest and he helped me sit up with one arm behind my back. Once I was sitting my face fell towards him and I buried it in the shaggy creamy sheepskin that smelled of food and tobacco. I rubbed my face into it and wept. (129 – 130)

This time, Ann-Marie wishes that she also could smell the Whitepainter's shabby waistcoat, and his stubborn presence pulls her down from a state where the body (Robor) is described as a prison. *City of Light* interlaces the conditions governing fictional creation and processes of flesh and blood. This is a theme that is focused in the *ekphrases* of Rune Hagberg's white boxes where image and word, inside and outside, ink and flesh meet.

In *City of Light*, as well as in her subsequent novels such as *Blackwater* and *Revive Me*, Ekman investigates the ideological and aesthetic values that have been connected to image and word respectively. The description of the two photographs in *Witches Rings* and *City of Light* illustrates that in Kerstin Ekman's *oeuvre* an aesthetics of fiction is formulated at the intersection of, and oscillation between, image-construction and image-criticism. This oscillation is intertwined not only with the aesthetic practice characterizing her work but also with their problematising of the past and the contemporary. Kerstin Ekman's *oeuvre* formulates a criticism of images and their various representational forms (paintings, photographs, the images of virtual reality, for example) while integrating different media's aesthetic expressions by theme and narrative technique. Occasionally, images are represented as deserving credence, that can be described in words, but also with a faith in their power to animate or recreate

the past, capture the moment and freeze time. But as often as they are utilised as tools for creation, images are employed for the critique of civilization that characterizes Ekman's entire body of work. The tension between image-construction and image-criticism is also intimately connected to the issues that, at their core, are bound up with the relation between verbal art and visual art, a fundamental trait of Ekman's aesthetic practice.

Notes

1. For an overview, see Cecilia Lindhé, 2008.
2. Only page numbers will be shown in the following citations from the text of *City of Light*.
3. For G. E. Lessing's definition of the spatial quality of the image, see footnote 5 below.
4. Gerard Genette establishes a difference between three types of frequency relations between the narrative (recit) and the story (histoire): singulative, repetitive and iterative narration. Genette's definition of singulative narration: "narrating once what happened once", See Genette, 1995, 114.
5. Genette defines an anachrony as "various types of discordance between the two orders of story and narrative", Genette, 1995, 34. Analepsis is according to Genette's definition "any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment", Genette, 1995, 40.
6. The concept of spatial form has been questioned by several critics and some argue that the concept couches fascist and ahistorical ideologies, see Frank, 1981, 202 – 243. W. J. T. Mitchell claims in his critique that all literature are more or less spatial and that it would be difficult to find literature that is not spatial. Another problem with Frank's essay, according to Mitchell, is that he does not question the normative force of G. E. Lessing's distinctionbetween spatial and temporal art forms in *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766), see Mitchell, 1980.
7. The difference between spatial and temporal art forms that Lessing claims in *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766), is based on the supposition that art forms are differently equipped to convey subject matter. See Lessing, 1994.
8. For an overview, see Ortner, 1974.
9. I have demonstrated in another essay how *City of Light* describes woman as body, nature and not least as merchandise. These are metaphors that allude to the modernist novel *City in Light* (1927) by Eyvind Johnson —Ekman both applies and repudiates this type of modernist aesthetics. See Lindhe, 2008.
10. *Ekphrasis* is a millennia-old concept that is both a technical device and an enduring literary mode. As a technical term within the study and practice of rhetoric, the origin of *ekhprasis* is documented in the first century AD where it occurs in the *Progymnasmata* – exercises in rhetorical composition used in the Hellenistic schools. Etymologically, *ekphrasis* originates from Greek *ek* (out) *phrazein* (to explicate, declare) and meant originally "to tell in full" (εκφραζω). The goal of *ekphrasis* was *enargeia* (εναργεια) – to make the motif graphic and alive for the spectator to "see" what was before him, see *Progymnasmata*, 2003.
11. Rune Hagberg's early art practice is characterised by a critique of the establishment. Early in his career he got in touch with the Japaneese Bokujingroup and were invited to exhibit in Japan (1956). However, his art had already been presented in the Japaneese journal "Bokubi" (1955) together with Alberto Giacometti, Hans Arp, Willem de Kooning and Henri Michaux.
12. *Gränsens position. Ett möte med konstnären Rune Hagberg. En dokumentärfilm om och kring Rune Hagbergs tankar och verk* was directed and produced by Johan Hagberg in 2005.
13. The handwritten poem "This is the sign for wood and water" has been published in Lindhé, 2008. Cecilia Lindhé has translated the parts of the poem in this essay.

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Beyond Stieg Larsson: Contemporary Trends and Traditions in Swedish Crime Fiction

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Abstract Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy is the product of a long and diverse Swedish crime fiction tradition, but it has also become a generative force in the said tradition. By surveying the landscape of Swedish crime fiction both before and after the trilogy, this article aims to shed light on current trends and developments in the genre. Particular focus is placed on the changing role of the police procedural, the new wave of women writers, recent diversification, and the current Europeanization of Swedish crime fiction. It is concluded that Swedish crime fiction today is characterized not only by an increasing diversification in terms of genre, detective characters, and setting, but also draws new inspiration from both within and outside the genre. The *Millennium* trilogy is shown to be a likely stimulus for many of these developments. A majority of crime novels today are set in rural, idyllic locations, and the police procedural characterized by social criticism is now losing its preeminent position. Authors with ambitions to continue exploit the crime genre for political purposes now tend to expand their horizons beyond the national and Swedish. They are thus moving one step further than Larsson, who primarily criticized social and political issues in a national context.
Key Words Swedish crime fiction; Stieg Larsson; Henning Mankell; police procedural; genre, detective characters

Following the success of Swedish crime writer Stieg Larsson and his *Millennium* trilogy (2005 - 2007),[1] Swedish crime fiction is now in great demand all over the world. In the last few years, Stieg Larsson and Henning Mankell have been among the world's bestselling authors of any fiction genre (Kovac and Wischenbart; Flood); but they are not the only Swedish writers experiencing international success. At the same time as Swedish crime fiction is garnering substantial attention within Sweden, an increasing number of new Swedish crime writers are being translated into different languages.[2]

The product of a long and diverse Swedish crime fiction tradition, Stieg Larsson's trilogy has also become a generative force in this tradition. This article surveys the canon of Swedish crime fiction both prior and subsequent to the *Millennium* trilogy, thus aiming to shed light on current trends and developments in Swedish crime fiction beyond Stieg Larsson. In particular, the role of the police procedural, the new wave

of women writers, the recent genre diversification, and the current Europeanization of Swedish crime fiction will be addressed.

The Rise and Fall of the Police Procedural

Ever since the mid-1960s, when Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö launched[3] their ten-novel series, *Roman om ett brott* (*The Story of a Crime*, 1965 – 1975), the police procedural has come to be the preferred crime fiction sub-genre among Swedish crime writers. Sjöwall and Wahlöö's novels were inspired by the American version of the police procedural genre, in particular the type of novels written by Ed McBain, among others.[4] However, the novels of Sjöwall and Wahlöö were also a product of their time. In Sweden, the 1960s and early 1970s were characterized by a general political "awakening," and Sjöwall and Wahlöö explicitly set out to employ the crime genre in order to reach as large an audience as possible with their social and political criticism. Wanting to explore and expose the shortcomings of the Swedish welfare state (Sjöwall and Wahlöö 9 – 10), they found the police procedural particularly suitable for this end. Internationally, the author duo is also well-known for having politicized the police procedural genre (Dove 19, 23, 217 – 224, 240, 242).

Inspired by the success of Sjöwall and Wahlöö's novels, many Swedish crime writers later used police procedurals to advance social criticism, often even using the same ten-installment format. In addition to Henning Mankell, representative of other authors writing in this tradition in the 1990s and early 2000s were Håkan Nesser, Åke Edwardson, Leif G. W. Persson, and Arne Dahl (pen name for Jan Arnald). Mankell is the most political of the four, sharing the same 1960s' socialist background as Sjöwall and Wahlöö, as well as having started out as a proletarian realist writer before turning to crime fiction in the 1990s. Mankell's debut as a crime writer came in 1991 with *Mördare utan ansikte* (*Faceless Killers*), the first novel in his popular Kurt Wallander series. Like his influential predecessors, Mankell also claims to use the crime genre to reach out to a broader public with a socialist message (Thomson). Already in *Mördare utan ansikte*, Mankell introduced his readers to the themes of racism and the relation to the ethnic "Other" (Westerståhl Stenport, Passim). These themes would come to characterize the whole Wallander series (McCorrestine 77 – 80; Nestingen 252), as well as Mankell's other crime novels. Andrew Nestingen notes that "Mankell's novels are a discourse on solidarity and they attempt to force readers to think through solidarity's ethical and political dimensions" (232). The concept of solidarity found in Mankell's novels is transnational, with a socialist underpinning. In *Kennedys hjärna* (*Kennedy's Brain*, 2005), for example, he strongly criticises Western pharmaceutical companies for exploiting poor Africans as guinea pigs in the search for a cure for AIDS.[5] In order to raise awareness and understanding of the urgency of the AIDS problem in Africa, Mankell also explores the possibility of building solidarity by trying to understand, and bridge the distance to, the African "Other" (Bergman "Paradoxes", Passim).

By setting his Wallander novels in the small town of Ystad on the south coast of Sweden, Mankell abandons the urban setting characteristic of the police procedural

tradition made popular in Sweden by Sjöwall and Wahlöö. His ties to the latter are still strong in his promotion of social criticism, however; and strong parallels can also be drawn between the figure of Inspector Wallander and Sjöwall and Wahlöö's police detective Martin Beck. Both detectives are at the center of the story and the police team, and they are both divorced, middle-aged men with daughters. Furthermore, they both suffer from health issues and have melancholic tendencies. Indeed this type of detective has become the "poster boy" for Swedish crime fiction, appearing in the majority of police procedurals from the 1960s until well into the first decade of the 2000s. Typical examples can be found in the novels, among others, by Håkan Nesser, Karin Wahlberg, and Mari Jungstedt. In Sweden, this detective type is sometimes referred to as "the gastric ulcer detective" (*magsårsdetektiven*), or the melancholic detective (Arvas and Nestingen 9; Kärrholm "Detektivgestalten" 62 – 63, 65; Lundin *Århundradets svenska deckare* 7 – 8). In many ways, he—for it is usually a man—resembles detectives of the British tradition such as Inspector Morse or Inspector Wexford, rather than the cops of the American tradition. There is also a specific Swedish sense of humility in the melancholic Swedish detective, as he often doubts his own competence and is always fallible. "When they drink too much liquor they tend to act stupid. When they drink too much coffee their stomachs hurt," Margo Jefferson concludes in *The New York Times* in comparing Swedish crime fiction detectives with their American counterparts.

In addition to these central characters, the investigative teams in Swedish police procedurals today consist of a diverse set of charactersin terms of age, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. To some extent, this diversification is an expression of political correctness, but it is also a way to attract a wider range of readers by making them more likely to identify with some of the characters; and, perhaps most importantly, it reflects the increasing diversity in Swedish society. The presence of favorably portrayed homosexual (and bisexual) characters in Stieg Larsson's trilogy is thus no sign of originality but a relatively common genre trait in Swedish crime fiction (Bergman "Lisbeth Salander" 141). Notwithstanding, this diversity is not as pronounced among the protagonists as it is among the supporting cast of characters. Although women central characters are now common, the Sjöwall and Wahlöö model revolving around a middle-aged, heterosexual, ethnic Swede—preferably the melancholic detective type—has remained a very persistent one.

Despite the majority of the Wallander novels having been written and set in the 1990s, Mankell does not abandon his melancholic detective until he finally writes him off for good in *Den orolige mannen* (*The Troubled Man*, 2009). In Wallander's succumbing to Alzheimer's disease, Mankell makes it clear that not only is Wallander's time up, but also that the days of this particular type of Swedish police detective are over. In this last novel of the series, the main mystery is not even a case Wallander handles as a police officer (indicating that his police work no longer takes center stage); instead, he works as a private investigator, investigating a disappearance in his family. Mankell thus signals a generational shift by announcing that it is time for a new type of detective in Swedish crime fiction—a detective more fit to handle the Europeanization, globalization, individualization, technologicalization, and brutalization

of Sweden in a post-welfare state era (Bergman "Initiating a European Turn"). Stieg Larsson's Lisbeth Salander is thus an early example of an attempt to create such a detective, another being Swedish crime writer Arne Dahl's new crime series (beginning with *Viskleken* (*Chinese Whispers*, 2011) about an operational group within Europol, where a group of modern police officers from different parts of Europe cooperate.

What Larsson suggested—particularly by his use of the Salander character as investigator, but also with her journalist partner Mikael Blomkvist—Mankell thus confirms. The police novels of the early 2000s have also tended to devote less attention to *each* member of the police team, favoring instead one or two central characters who are surrounded by more vaguely sketched colleagues. Whereas this is an expression of the increasing individualism present in Swedish society (Bergman "Polisromanen" 118), it can also be interpreted as part of the diversification of the genre currently taking place in Sweden. Sometimes the main police character is also matched, or competes, with an investigator from another profession; Camilla Läckberg's police protagonist, for example, is paired up with an author, writing duo Michael Hjorth and Hans Rosenfeldt's with a psychologist, and Jungstedt's with a journalist. Additionally, there is now a greater diversity of Swedish crime fiction detectives, not only in terms of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, but also when it comes to their professions: it is increasingly common to encounter medical doctors, journalists, lawyers, medical examiners, and many other professional categories. Furthermore, more extreme characters have also started to emerge. One of the most notable is profiler and psychologist Sebastian Bergman, one of the protagonists in the police novels by Hjorth and Rosenfeldt. Sebastian Bergman is a truly unsympathetic character, brilliant in his profession, but manipulative and completely indifferent to other people's feelings. Drafted in to work on cases by a reluctant police force, he also suffers from a sex addiction that sees him initiate sexual encounters with suspects and witnesses alike. In the second novel, *Lärjungen* (*The Disciple*, 2011), the case investigated even involves a murderer who starts targeting women with whom Sebastian Bergman has had sex.

While it is by no means unique, it has not been a particularly common feature of Swedish crime fiction that characters in the investigative role become personally involved in their cases in the way Sebastian Bergman does in *Lärjungen*. Recent years, however, have seen the more frequent use of devices from the psychological thriller genre, which means that this kind of personal involvement has increased. This is undoubtedly a result of the increasing international popularity of serial killer fiction, where it is common for the murderer to challenge and target the lead detective (Priestman 182). In Sweden, meanwhile, Stieg Larsson's weaving of his characters' private lives into the plot might also have inspired a growing blurring between detectives' professional and personal lives.

Although the police procedural characterized by elements of social criticism is still popular among a number of Swedish crime writers, it has encountered competition in the first decade of the 2000s. In particular, many writers are now developing neo-romantic, apolitical police novels set in a timeless countryside, characterized by a small-town bourgeoisie mentality (Bergman "Well-Adjusted Cops"). Even if some

writers still follow the path of Sjöwall and Wahlöö, it is clear that the majority of Swedish crime writers today are leaving politics behind. Bestselling authors such as Läckberg, Jungstedt, Wahlberg, and many others, tend to dedicate their stories and murder motifs to past individual and personal injustices, rather than addressing issues of contemporary national or international politics. Instead, these novels primarily promote traditional family values and outdated gender stereotypes, and they are set in a Sweden that almost harks back to the welfare utopia of the 1950s—unaffected by globalization, organized crime, and the negative influences of new information technology. These novels show what can be described as a current feminist backlash in Swedish society, and they are also characterized by a liberal ideology, mirroring the more individualistic society that Sweden has become (Westerståhl Stenport and Ovesdotter Alm; Bergman "Well Adjusted Cops" 37). In large part, this focus on personal rather than political mysteries constitutes a revival of influences stemming from the British crime fiction tradition that dominated the Swedish crime fiction scene up until the arrival of Sjöwall and Wahlöö (Kärrholm "Konsten att lägga pussel" 8; Persson 389). Jungstedt, for example, takes the isolation from the contemporary, surrounding world to the degree that the world outside the island of Gotland, the setting for her mysteries, does not seem to exist at all in her novels, other than as a distant and decadent "otherness" (Bergman "Well-Adjusted Cops" 41 – 43). The popularity of these neo-romantic novels among Swedish, and perhaps international, readers is partly a reaction to a world that is perceived as increasingly alien and frightening. These novels create an illusion of a society that is safe and recognizable, where murderers are just single individuals with personal motifs, and where they can be captured by good police officers restoring safety to the community.

The few Swedish authors today who still convey social criticism seem to focus on aspects of societal change that have been brought about by globalization, rather than critiquing perceived injustices on the part of the Swedish authorities. This is true for authors like Dahl, Persson, the writing duo of Anders Roslund and Börge Hellström, and several others. Many of their novels address trafficking and organized crime: Sweden is often depicted as being hit by a wave of criminality from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics. In these novels, the Internet enables everything from pedophilia to economic crimes and the abuse of women; gang-related violence is also well-established in the major Swedish cities. Those who like Stieg Larsson still deal with national politics, often focus on media criticism, or address the lack of resources of the Swedish police. Criticism of secret fractions among the Swedish security police in the manner of Stieg Larsson is rare today, but clearly in the tradition of Sjöwall and Wahlöö. Some of the more politically interested crime writers are also starting to "leave" Sweden, as they set their novels outside its borders.

Henning Mankell, Stieg Larsson, and others have brought the Sjöwall and Wahlöö tradition of crime fiction—one filled with socialist cops, capitalist villains, and critical depictions of the Swedish welfare state—to an international audience. It is clear, however, that this is not the only type of Swedish crime fiction attractive to readers outside of Sweden today. As many of the neo-romantic novels are also being translated, the idyllic picture painted of Sweden—the ideal society that has little to

do with real-world Sweden—seems to be just as appealing. With an increasing international readership, this image of Sweden as the perfect welfare state will continue to be transmitted and preserved in the minds of readers worldwide—despite the fact that this is a society that hardly exists any more, other than in fiction. For many of these non-Swedish readers, in fact, crime fiction might be the primary source of knowledge about Sweden. In consequence, the image of the utopian welfare state will continue to persist and spread as an alternative to the more critical picture provided by for example Stieg Larsson and Mankell. Perhaps it is precisely this dream of the existence of a true welfare society that is attractive to many of the international readers, regardless of whether it has anything to do with Swedish reality or not.

Women Crime Writers

In the 1990s, British and Norwegian women crime writers were immensely popular among the Swedish reading public; by comparison, it seemed puzzling that there were hardly any women authors of Swedish crime fiction. With the exception of Maj Sjöwall and Maria Lang (pen name for Dagmar Lange, who from 1949 to 1990 wrote numerous popular whodunits in the style of Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers), Swedish women crime writers have been a relatively unacknowledged minority. During the first century of Swedish crime fiction, up until 1993, there were a total of about seventy women crime writers, the vast majority of whom had only published one or two novels. Of these only ten, including Lang and Sjöwall (writing with Wahlöö), had written more than a handful of crime novels (Wopenka "Bibliografi" 69 - 107).[6] In the first part of the 1990s, moreover, Åsa Nilsonne and Kerstin Ekman were the only contemporary women crime writers to have received any critical attention; during this time, Nilsonne wrote two successful novels, *Tunnare än blod* (*Thinner than Blood*, 1991) and *I det tysta* (*Quietly*, 1992). Ekman, who had written several crime novels between the late 1950s and the early 1970s—thereafter she became established as a mainstream author—returned to the crime genre in 1993 with *Händelser vid vatten* (*Blackwater*). *Händelser vid vatten* became a huge bestseller in Sweden, receiving awards for the best Swedish crime novel of the year (by The Swedish Academy of Detection 1993), best Swedish novel of the year (The August Prize 1993), and as the best Nordic novel of the year (Nordic Council's Literature Prize 1994). In combination with Mankell's success after his debut as a crime writer in 1991, Ekman's achievement can be regarded as heralding a new wave in Swedish crime fiction that later grew to dominate the Swedish book charts at the turn of the twenty-first century.

As late as 1997, however, the number of women writers of Swedish crime fiction was still notably low, which prompted the Swedish crime fiction journal *Jury* (1972 - 2008) to take action to promote crime writing by women. They did so by establishing the Poloni prize (named after Swedish crime writer Helena Poloni, pen name of Ingegerd Stadener who wrote three crime novels 1956 - 1978). The new prize was to be awarded on a yearly basis to the most promising Swedish woman crime writer. The first winner was Liza Marklund in 1998, followed by Aino Trosell in 1999, Åsa Nilsonne in 2000, and Eva-Marie Liffner in 2001. Thereafter it was decided that the prize was no longer needed. In the space of just a few short years, the prize had

helped launch a new generation of Swedish women crime writers, to the extent that, in 2001, seventeen of the fifty new Swedish crime novels published were written by women (*Jurys deckarkatalog* 18 - 19).[7]

Liza Marklund's prize-winning novel, *Sprängaren* (*The Bomber*, 1998), set an example for many aspiring women crime writers, and not least the feminist messages of the novel contributed to its success. Marklund's protagonist, crime journalist Annika Bengtzon, received widespread attention for her struggles to balance a career and family life—a motif that has since become a staple in Swedish crime fiction (Bergman "Well-Adjusted Cops" 39). Whereas previous Swedish crime novels had neglected the everyday life of Swedish women, Marklund was largely responsible for introducing this aspect of society into the genre. Throughout the series following the life of Annika Bengtzon, Marklund aims to convey a feminist message by focusing on "not allowing women to be abused by men and by society as a whole, and empowerment, enabling women to occupy more positions of power in society" (Kärrholm "Swedish Queens" 142). The ninth installment in the series, *Du gamla, du fria* (Thou ancient, thou free (also the title of the Swedish national anthem)), was recently published. And while Bengtzon seems to have become more and more of an eccentric loner, and less of a wife and mother, she nonetheless continues to be a feminist presence in Swedish crime fiction.

The first decade of the 2000s saw women writers finally achieve a major breakthrough in Swedish crime fiction. More than eighty Swedish women crime writers wrote their debut novels between 1998 and 2007 (Wopenka "Kvinnlig deckarhistoria" 7), and in 2010, out of a total of 112 new original Swedish crime novels to be published, forty-one were written by women ("Deckarkatalogen").[8] This represents therefore a substantial increase in the number of novels written by women, and yet the proportion of women crime writers compared to men is almost identical to that in 2001. However, in terms of the most successful novels in 2010, the percentage of women writers was substantially higher: of the twenty-two Swedish crime novels reaching the top ten on the Swedish bestseller list for fiction that year, women were authors of ten of them ("Topplistor").

Women writers are thus well established and popular on the contemporary Swedish crime fiction scene. Among the mostpopular in recent years, apart from Marklund, are Åsa Larsson, Inger Frimansson, Karin Alvtegen, Aino Trosell, Camilla Läckberg, Anna Jansson, Mari Jungstedt, and Helene Tursten. They have all written long series of novels, most of them have followed the same protagonists since the late 1990s or early 2000s, and all of them have been translated into many different languages. Åsa Larsson, Frimansson, Alvtegen, and Trosell write primarily in the psychological thriller genre, and are often considered somewhat more "literary" than the others. Läckberg, Jansson, and Jungstedt all write neo-romantic police procedurals set in the Swedish countryside, while Tursten writes more in the Sjöwall and Wahlöö tradition of the police procedural and sets her novels in urban Gothenburg.

Except for Jungstedt, all these writers use women protagonists in their novels. Some of them are quite traditional police detectives, such as Tursten's Irene Huss or Jansson's Maria Wern, while the others occupy a wide range of professions, from

Läckberg's author Erika Falk to Åsa Larsson's lawyer Rebecca Martinsson. Most original is Trosell's main character, Siv Dahlin, who is an ordinary middle-aged woman from a working class background. In the different novels Dahlin is variously depicted as unemployed, struggling to pay her bills, and having to take on whatever job comes along just to make ends meet. In *Om hjärtat ännu slår* (*If the Heart Still Beats*, 2000), she works in a tannery, while in *Se dem inte i ögonen* (Do not Look Them in the Eyes, 2002) she is a cleaner in a ski resort hotel. In *Tvångströjan* (*The Strait-Jacket*, 2004), furthermore, she works as a caregiver, driving around and helping the sick and elderly in their homes, at the same time as cleaning holiday homes in the mountains, while in *Järngreppet* (*The Iron Grip*, 2008) she is employed as a cook at an isolated hotel conference center. The portrayal of Siv Dahlin gives Trosell the opportunity to dissect Swedish society "from below," and all her novels contain a strong class critique as well as a feminist social critique. This makes Trosell unique in contemporary Swedish crime fiction. Although there are a few authors who also express explicit class criticism, for example Kjell Eriksson, feminism is scarce.[9] The combination of the two is only found really in Trosell's works.

Despite the prevalence of so many women writers, and women protagonists in novels by both men and women writers, Swedish crime fiction is still dominated by traditional gender stereotypes (Bergman "Well-Adjusted Cops" 38 – 39). Stieg Larsson, Marklund, and Trosell are the most important feminist examples, but they have not had much in the way of competition in this area. Some of the most recent women writers do, however, display feminist ambitions, as is explored further below. Nilsonne's *Kyskhetsbältet* (*The Chastity Belt*, 2000) should also be mentioned as a feminist contribution, which criticizes the specific pressures women holding high-ranking positions face in the workplace (Bergman "Crime Fiction" 197), a topic that was also central to Marklund's *Sprängaren*. In spite of the current paucity of feminist perspectives and social criticism, the novels of Swedish women writers do contribute to the fictional portrayal of Swedish everyday life. From Sjöwall and Wahlöö onward, crime fiction has become the dominant genre in Sweden for depicting contemporary society and social life, with numerous women writers since the late 1990s having further enriched the genre through the depiction of women's lives and perspectives.

Today, a new generation of women writers is emerging in Swedish crime fiction. Among those promising authors likely to have a future bearing on this field are Kristina Olsson, Karin Gerhardsen, the sister duo of Camilla Grebe and Åsa Träff, and Katarina Wennstam. While Olsson and Gerhardsen both write traditional police procedurals set in Stockholm, their uniqueness lies with the women detectives—Olsson's Fredrika Bergman and Gerhardsen's Petra Westman—assuming important roles within their respective police teams. Fredrika Bergman is a young criminologist who comes to work for the police, and while being in a long-term relationship with a married, older man, she dreams of having children. In *Tusenskönor* (*Daisies*, 2010), she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a daughter but under far from ideal circumstances, as the father of the child becomes a suspect in a murder investigation.[10] Petra Westman meanwhile is a young, single police officer who in the first novel of the series, *Pepparkakshuset* (*The Gingerbread House*, 2008), gets drugged and raped by a man

she meets in a bar, and in parallel with the main official cases handled by the police through the series, the reader follows her in her attempts to extract revenge. Both these heroes depart from the norm of how the majority of women police officers were characterized in Swedish crime fiction in the early 2000s. Following the success of Marklund's journalist detective, other authors have also followed in her wake by similarly depicting their women police officers as married with children, struggling to balance work pressures with family life. Indeed, with a new generation of authors—perhaps inspired in part by Stieg Larsson's Lisbeth Salander—character variation is increasing considerably in all crime genres.

Grebe and Träff employ a woman psychologist, Siri Bergman, as their main character. She is a loner, afraid of commitment after her husband's suicide, and in the first novel of the series, *Någon sorts frid* (*Some Kind of Peace*, 2009), she is targeted by a violent stalker. Through her clients, Siri Bergman becomes entangled in mysteries and ends up in dangerous situations, a particular feature that contributes to placing Grebe and Träff's novels close to the psychological thriller genre. Furthermore, this writing duo deploys a strong theme that underlies each novel. In *Någon sorts frid* it concerns coming to terms with grief for loved ones who have died or left, and in *Bittrare än döden* (*More Bitter than Death*, 2010) the destructive power of love is at the center of the plot. *Bittrare än döden* can be considered a feminist crime novel, because while highlighting the humiliation, violence, and sacrifices women are subjected to and put up with in the name of love—from date rapes and incest, to decades in violent relationships—the mechanisms that make women suffer this kind of abuse are simultaneously criticized. Almost unique in the Swedish context is also the use of the therapeutic session as a narrative element.

Wennstam is also a crime writer with strong feminist ambitions. In a trilogy that portrays district attorney Madeleine Edwards as the main detective, Wennstam explores traditional male-dominated professions and the exercise of power over others, one that can easily be abused. In particular, it is these men's power over women's lives and bodies that is at stake. In *Smuts* (2007, Dirt) the legal profession is in focus; *Dödergök* (*Omen of Death*, 2008) deals with the police; and *Alfahannen* (2010, The alpha male) with the film industry. Wennstam has also recently begun a new trilogy with similar ambitions, this time featuring two women protagonists—a police detective and a lawyer. The first novel in the new series, *Svikaren* (*The Deserter*, 2012), is a critical investigation of intolerance and violence in the world of sport.

The up-and-coming generation of women crime writers in Sweden would thus seem to bode well for the future of the genre—and women writers in it—in spite of the feminist backlash in Swedish society in the last decade. What is more, there have been many attempts by new women writers to further develop the genre in fresh directions, and feminism now seems to have become more prominent again, at least in crime fiction.

Hybrids and Genre Experiments

In the wake of Stieg Larsson's success, Swedish crime fiction has expanded substantially to encompass many different varieties of the genre. The recipe for his success

rests on two parameters in particular: the woman protagonist Lisbeth Salander, and the way Larsson plays with the genre.[11] In the *Millennium* trilogy, Larsson employs and refers to a great number of crime fiction subgenres (Agger; Lundin "Larssons trilogi" 20; Thomassen). While this creates moments of recognition as well as surprise for crime fiction readers, thus contributing to the enormous popularity of the novels, it has also made it clear to other crime writers that the police procedural is no longer the only path to success in the genre.

Stieg Larsson's genre meddling has been inspirational to many Swedish crime writers. Some of them have even attempted to "invent" their own genre hybrids with the aim of attracting particular groups of readers, many of whom were not previously avid consumers of crime fiction. Former chick lit author Denise Rudberg writes what she calls "Elegant Crime," crime novels set in high society and filled with lifestyle and romance elements. Jens Lapidus, a lawyer practicing criminal law, has written a trilogy which mainly depicts criminals as the protagonists in a genre he refers to as "Stockholm Noir," and one which is heavily influenced by James Ellroy. Another of this new generation of writers is Christoffer Carlsson, who writes thrillers set in the Swedish countryside under the genre heading "Countryside Noir" (*glesbygd noir*).[12] It is worthy of note that attempts at naming and branding new genres serve primarily promotional purposes, not really contributing anything new to the crime genre at large. However, in the Swedish context, they—and Lapidus in particular, to whom I will return—do nevertheless constitute a fresh take on the genre.

Even when not attempting to name new genre hybrids, Swedish crime writers today often mix different crime fiction subgenres, and sometimes they introduce elements from other popular fiction genres as well. Since2000, there has for example been an increasing use of romance in Swedish crime fiction, a tendency influencing all subgenres. Most crime writers today dedicate notably more page space to their heroes' love lives than they did just ten years ago. This also means that there is now more sex in Swedish crime fiction. Previously, sex was almost only present as a criminal act in the form of rape and abuse. Today, however, it is common to find explicit depictions of the sex lives of the fictional detectives. The action genre has also found its way into Swedish crime fiction, and not only in the shape of action thrillers. Among the most successful recent authors is the writing duo behind the pen name Lars Kepler (Alexander Ahndoril and Alexandra Coelho Ahndoril) and, particularly in the novel *Paganini-kontraktet* (*The Paganini Contract*, 2010), they insert scenes reminiscent of a Hollywood action thriller into what is otherwise primarily an unusually violent police novel.

Horror fiction has become another favorite source of inspiration for Swedish crime writers lately, a trend in line with the success of Swedish vampire films such as *Frostbiten* (*Frostbite*, directed by Anders Banke, 2006) and *Låt den rätte komma in* (*Let the Right One In*, directed by Tomas Alfredson, 2008). Johan Theorin has been the most successful writer in incorporating horror elements into his novels. Set on the island of Öland off the east coast of Sweden, his novels, which include *Skumtimmen* (*Echoes from the Dead*, 2007), *Nattfåk* (*The Darkest Room*, 2008), and *Blodläge*

(*The Quarry*, 2009), are all characterized by dark moods that evoke the horror genre.[13] Although Theorin never lets his stories cross over into the supernatural, a few other Swedish writers have. A recent example is Amanda Hellberg's *Döden på en blek häst* (Death on a Pale Horse, 2011), in which a Swedish student at Oxford University encounters the supernatural while trying to solve the murder of her mother. Two other Swedish crime writers who tread the borders of the supernatural are Åsa Larsson and Mons Kallentoft. The latter both let their dead speak—often in long monologues set in italics, where they reflect upon their own life and death, as well as on the ongoing investigation. Sometimes the investigator protagonists, Åsa Larsson's lawyer Rebecka Martinsson and Kallentoft's police detective Malin Fors, sense a presence, but the border is never literally crossed. The monologues of the dead can therefore be interpreted as just narrative finesse, rather than a deviation into the fantasy genre. Additionally, Kepler also evokes this trend by a recurring play with elements bordering on New Age and the supernatural, but eventually a rational explanation is always provided.

Another genre variation becoming increasingly common are novels depicting Swedish society from "below." Often the protagonists of these novels are criminals in a metropolitan environment; young men ranking low in the criminal hierarchy. The most important writer representing this development is Lapidus. With exceptional linguistic sensibility, he portrays the underbelly of Stockholm, spanning from the rich brats posturing in the fancy bars around Stureplan, to the second-generation immigrant kids from the poor suburbs. Lapidus skillfully alters his language depending on who is talking, and even though it is a fictional oral language, he manages to make his prose sound convincing. Lapidus' use of language thus lends an authentic feel to his novels and, in combination with his presenting lesser-known aspects of Stockholm—hitherto neglected or obscured—as well as new types of crime fiction hero, is an innovative addition to the Swedish crime fiction genre.

Another author who also provides an underdog view of Stockholm and of Swedish society is Anders De La Motte. While in contrast to Lapidus his main characters are all of Swedish descent, some of them are also petty criminals. De La Motte's debut novel, *Geim* (*Game*, 2010), concerns a young man who is lured into playing an alternate reality game, and forced to complete increasingly extreme and illegal missions. Characteristic for both Lapidus's and De La Motte's novels is that the heroes are outsiders in society, fighting from disadvantageous positions for survival and success. It is likely that Stieg Larsson's Lisbeth Salander has also played a part in paving the road for these new non-traditional heroes.

In addition to the genre diversity, therange of professions that Swedish crime fiction detectives occupy has increased, following the publication of Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy. A notable new category that should at least be mentioned is that of medical examiners and the forensic genre. Although the forensic genre has been popular among Swedish readers since the 1990s, and the television audience since the early 2000s, it has not been until very recently that Swedish authors have contributed to the genre. This has many explanations, probably the most significant of which is the fact that up until recently the overriding majority of Swedish crime writers had a

background in the humanities or the social sciences (Bergman "Crime Fiction" 195). Increasing diversity in recent years can therefore also been observed in terms of author backgrounds, with several writers, most notably Elias Palm and Varg Gyllander, making forays into the forensic genre. Palm writes about a woman forensic pathologist, Ella Andersson, and Gyllander's protagonists are forensic experts Ulf Holtz and Pia Levin. While Gyllander never dwells on scientific and technical details, these are the more prominent in Palm's novels, something that can likely be attributed to the fact that Palm himself works in forensic medicine.

Ascribing all the credit for the new diversification of Swedish crime fiction to the success of Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy is of course an exaggeration. The general expansion of the crime fiction scene and other current trends in popular culture—such as the increasing popularity of fantasy and forensic television series, to name but a couple—have also been influential. Still, there is no doubt that Stieg Larsson's trilogy has been important for breaking the domination of the police procedural, for presenting possible alternatives as to how crime writers can get in amongst the bestseller lists, and for increasing the national and international demand for Swedish crime fiction.

Europeanization of Swedish Crime Fiction

Some authors, who during the 1990s and early 2000s wrote police procedurals characterized by social criticism in the tradition of Sjöwall and Wahlöö, continue down that path. However, while the main target of criticism used to be the disintegration of the Swedish welfare state, it is now the influences of globalization, and largely, Europeanization, that have become the new center of focus.[14] Furthermore, fictional Swedish detectives are now beginning to solve crimes outside the national borders of Sweden. The most characteristic example is Arne Dahl, who after writing a long series of Stockholm police novels closely following Sjöwall and Wahlöö's lead, has redeployed some of his Swedish police characters in a new series about an operational unit within Europol. The first novel in Dahl's new series, *Viskleken* (2011), spans topics that range from economic corruption in American banks and environmental crimes in China, to organized crime in Italy and the Baltic states—everything with far-reaching international consequences.

Dahl is by no means the first to offer up more European perspectives in his novels. Mankell's last Wallander novel, *Den orolige mannen* (2009), presents a society where people—criminals and others alike—are no longer limited by (Swedish) national perspectives. Mankell depicts this as a necessary generational shift: the generation born in the 1940s that has until recently occupied most positions of power in Swedish society, is being replaced by new generations identifying themselves as Europeans, rather than as Swedes (Bergman "Initiating a European Turn"). Other authors who show similar tendencies, and who set their novels outside of Sweden, are Håkan Nesser, Åke Edwardson, and Liza Marklund. For example, Marklund's *Du gamla, du fria* (2011) explores the consequences of the European Union creating economic and political barriers against in particular the countries of East Africa. For those Swedish crime writers who still have the ambition to present social criticism and

discuss political issues in their fiction, topics similar to those addressed by Dahl and Marklund are likely to appear more frequently in the future.

Today Swedish crime fiction is characterized by a strong and increasing diversification in terms of genre as well as detective characters and setting, with new inspiration coming from both within and outside the genre. Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy has also been an important source of inspiration for many of these developments. While the type of police procedural made popular by Sjöwall and Wahlöö is now losing its dominant position, many authors still favor the police novel, and are exploring it in new forms. Therein, social criticism is not as prominent as it used to be, and a majority of the police novels today are set in rural, idyllic locations, drawing heavily from the British tradition. Authors with ambitions to use the genre for political purposes, by presenting social and political analysis and criticism, now tend to expand their horizons beyond the national and Swedish. In thus doing, they are venturing a step further than Stieg Larsson, who primarily dissected Swedish institutions and dealings in the manner of Sjöwall and Wahlöö.

Although Swedish crime fiction has a long and multifaceted history, the contemporary Swedish crime novel builds primarily upon the modern crime novel developed in the mid-1960s by its founding "parents," Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö. Within this modern tradition, there have been a number of milestone novels that have been particularly important for the development of the genre. I would suggest that these novels are Sjöwall and Wahlöö's *Roseanna* (1965) and *Terroristerna* (1975), Mankell's *Mördare utan ansikte* (1991), Ekman's *Händelser vid vatten* (1993), Marklund's *Sprängaren* (1998), Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy (2005 – 2007), Lapidus' *Snabba Cash* (2006), Mankell's *Den orolige mannen* (2009), and Dahl's *Viskleken* (2011). Sjöwall and Wahlöö introduced the character of the melancholic detective and the police procedural characterized by social criticism in *Roseanna*, with their influential "style" culminating in their last novel *Terroristerna*. Mankell's *Mördare utan ansikte*, for its part, revitalized the tradition of Sjöwall and Wahlöö and popularized the rural setting in the police procedural genre. Ekman made an important contribution towards the acceptance of the genre as an important part of Swedish culture, while Marklund best epitomizes the breakthrough of women crime writers, who have become increasingly prominent in the last decade. Stieg Larsson, even if posthumously, has played a central role in motivating the diversification of the genre, as well paving the ground for the international success of Swedish crime fiction. Mankell's *Den orolige mannen* closes the chapter on the much-loved melancholic detective and points to the importance of a European perspective. Lapidus breaks new ground by combining social criticism and criminal heroes, whilst employing a diversity of language forms. It is safe to assume that he will likely inspire many Swedish authors to come. Finally, Dahl truly adopts the mantle of the European perspective laid down by Mankell, and *Viskleken* thus sets the scene for a new version of the Sjöwall and Wahlöö tradition. Whether this narrative of Swedish crime fiction of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, with its constellation of key authors and titles, will still be applicable in ten or twenty years' time, remains to be seen. Nevertheless, judging from the current buoyant state of the genre, the diversification, renewal, and

popularity of Swedish crime fiction will most likely continue well into the future.

Note

1. The Millennium trilogy consists of Män som hatar kvinnor (2005, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*), Flickan som lekte med elden (2006, *The Girl Who Played with Fire*), and Luftslottet som försvann (2007, *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest*).
2. The top ten bestseller lists in Sweden (published since 2001 by *Svensk Bokhandel*, a Swedish book trade journal) invariably include a high proportion of crime novels, most of them Swedish. In the top ten for fiction in 2010, eight of the books were crime fiction, seven of them Swedish (if counting a novel co-written by the Swede Liza Marklund and American James Patterson); in 2009 seven out of ten were crime fiction, six of these Swedish; in 2008 eight were crime fiction, all of them Swedish; in 2007 seven were Swedish crime fiction; also in 2006 seven were crime fiction, six of them Swedish; in 2005 seven were crime fiction, four of them Swedish (in this year the top three were Dan Brown novels); and finally, in 2004, five novels in the top ten were crime fiction, four of them Swedish. Before 2004 only monthly lists were made ("Topplistor").
3. For a substantial English introduction to Sjöwall and Wahlöö's novels, see Winston and Millerski 16 – 51.
4. Sjöwall and Wahlöö also translated Ed McBain. A difference between McBain and his followers are that Sjöwall and Wahlöö's characters develop throughout the series, while McBain's are rather static.
5. Outside of his crime novels, Mankell has also shown great engagement in creating awareness of the AIDS situation in Africa (cf. Bergman "Paradoxes" 337), and he is often invited to comment on social and political issues (Frisch 218; Nestingen 224 – 25).
6. It is impossible to produce exact numbers because many of the Swedish crime writers used pen names, and many of the real names—and thus also the sex—of these authors are still unknown.
7. Short story collections and a novel written in Swedish but published in Åland (Finland) during 2001 were not counted.
8. Two short story collections and two novels written in Swedish but published in Finland during 2010 were not counted.
9. Eriksson is available in English with Prinsessan av Burundi (2002, *The Princess of Burundi*), Nattens grymma stjärnor (2004, *The Cruel Stars of the Night*), Mannen från Bergen (2004, *The Demon of Dakar*), *and Den hand som skälver* (2007, The Hand that Trembles).
10. Ohlsson's first crime novel, Askungar (2009, *Unwanted*), is available in English.
11. Salander has many Swedish crime fiction "sisters," characters who are similar to her in one sense or another (Bergman "Lisbeth Salander"). However, the socially inept, physically dangerous, brilliant computer hacker is also someone who with her quirks, her ability to improvise, her survival skills, and her childish, Goth appearance, simultaneously constitute a new type of Swedish crime fiction hero, whose forerunners are primarily found among women in the action film genre. It has also been suggested that Salander is based on "the conventional male action hero" (Westerståhl Stenport and Ovesdotter Alm 171).
12. So far, only Lapidus is available in English, with the first novel in the trilogy, *Snabba cash* (2007, *Easy Money*).
13. Most of Åsa Larsson's novels are translated into English, while so far only Kallentoft's first in the Malin Fors series, Midvinterblod (2007, *Midwinter Sacrifice*), has been released to the English-speaking market.
14. Although for example Mankell, Karin Alfredsson, and a few other authors, have also set crime novels outside of Europe in the last decade, it appears that Europe and Europeanization is now fa-

vored by Swedish crime writers (cf. Bergman "Initiating a European Turn").

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The Labelization and Identity of Lisbeth Salander

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Abstract Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (English title) has produced a veritable renewing of the Swedish mystery/detective/crime novel. Larsson's writings give a voice of rationale to sometimes turbulent and changing times. The author employs an important factor and one of the major changes during the later half of the last century as a core theme, the advent of the personal computer. In this book, Larsson exposes not only the benefits of personal computers, but also its liabilities. One main topic he uses in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*[1] is one of the unexpected by-products of using computers. This paper examines how Larsson uses labels to define, Lisbeth Salander, one of two main protagonists in this book and a computer hacker, as a character of different identities. Larsson carefully uses these labels to give insight and connect the character to different sub-cultures that Lisbeth Salander embodies. Further discussed is how this label usage reveals Salander's transformation from a negative portrayal of a frustrated, reclusive computer hacker, into the reluctant, acceptable heroine.
Key words punk; Goth; label; hacker; Stieg Larsson; Lisbeth Salander

Introduction

In 1997 Stieg Larsson jots down a simple outline of a story. The narrative revolved around an elderly man who received flowers from an unknown person on his birthday; the catch here is that he had been receiving these flowers every year on his birthday for over forty years. The foundation for *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is that of a traditional mystery novel, the need to find out who is sending the flowers. This, though, is only the first link, and it is the catalyst in a chain of events the metamorphosis into a larger, noir trilogy. These books are important to the author in that they personally connected Larsson to social and cultural issues that the he had a private relation to.

This paper examines Lisbeth Salander, one of two main protagonists in this book, and how she is a character born of the computer sub-culture. The labels that are carefully used by Larsson and discussed in this paper give insight into different areas of the computer sub-culture that Lisbeth Salander embodies. Further discussed, is how label usage reveals Salander's transformation from a negative portrayal of a frustrated, reclusive computer hacker, into the reluctant, acceptable heroine.

Stieg Larsson (1954 – 2004) was a Swedish journalist of renown, with a background for being involved in issues that others might find sensitive or dangerous to delve into. His upbringing, as discussed below, had a definite imprint on his choices, some leading to an almost cathartic purging through his writings.

Larsson's life was different from many Swedes in that when his parents moved to Stockholm in 1955, Stieg remained in northern Sweden to be raised by his maternal grandparent (Pettersson 2011). His semi-idyllic childhood was greatly influenced by his grandfather's beliefs, which were very anti-Nazi and anti-fascist. These beliefs ended his grandfather in the Swedish work camp, Storsien, during World War II. Post WWII saw the transformation of Sweden from a neutral, non-voiced entity in World War II, to a voice for human rights, yet still keeping its tradition of neutrality, a political stance that the world has now come to expect. The youth culture of the 70's brought the rhetoric of Olof Palme to the forefront, and the Prime Minister's ever growing popularity in Sweden as a voice against the Vietnam War (Britannica. com). It was during this time of the early 70's that Larson met his life-companion, Eva Gabrielsson, at a rally opposing the Vietnam War in Umeå, in northern Sweden.

Larsson started his journalistic career as a graphic designer for Sweden's Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå, one of Sweden's leading news concerns. In the late 70's and early 80's, he became interested in the revival of right-wing politics in Sweden, and wrote for different media such as *Searchlight*. In 1995 in collaboration effort with among others, Andreas Rosenlund *Expo* was created. This magazine specialized in examining the racist, anti-semitic, anti-democratic and nationalist, far-right, their organizations and connections between countries. Even during his off hours Stieg had other writing projects, one being his short idea for what became the first of *The Millennium Trilogy*, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Larsson's work came to an abrupt end at the beginning of November in 2004, when he died of a heart attack, and leaving the world with some of the most interesting characters in Swedish crime fiction.

Lisbeth Salander was created by author Stieg Larsson as one of two main protagonists in his book *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Larsson was involved in working with individual's rights and female rights in particular (Webmaster 2012), and this work in his life could be contributed to an incident in his teenage years. This episode Larsson related to was from his youth, when he was about 15-years old; he stood by and did nothing when a girl he knew was raped (Winkler 2004) His later attempts at apologizing for his non-action were rebuffed by the female victim, it is possible that this incident gave Larsson a need to create a character such as Salander as a form of penance for his inaction?

Labels in Use

The use of labels is able to help "shed light on the construction, maintenance, and alteration of social identity" (Galinsky et al, 2003). By analysing the labels that Larsson makes use of in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, the reader can receive an understanding of the character's identity and evolution throughout this book. It is clear that Larsson's use of labels is not superficial; he knows the inherent meanings and critically applies them to both individual characters, as well as how labels are ap-

plied to groups (Galinsky et al, 2003; Stryker 2000) to help readers follow their respective development. Labels are commonly used to give information about something, to state an address or communicate something of importance such as a hazard or a security issue. More often than not, labels are used for product information; in this case the product is the protagonist Lisbeth Salander.

Salander's character and traits are revealed by herself, as well as other characters. These labels are descriptors with both denotations and connotations possible. The denotations are used with the conventions and understandings that are expected, whereas the use of labels and their connotations give other possibilities and information that goes beyond a surface understanding. Labels that are denotations are straight forward and literal. A stop sign will denote *to stop*; whereas the connotation of a stop sign gives other possibilities such as a warning; you take a risk of possible injury of you do *not* stop. The different ways in which Larsson uses labels, both as denotations and connotations, give more information to the reader when he is aware of them and helps reveals a multi-faceted individual.

One finds that labels are attached to items in different ways, for example sewn into a garment or printed on a package. Salander's character seems to have a multitude of these; some are sewn into *her* and can only be cut out, whereas other labels can be imprinted on fabric and might fade with time. The hacker label used is one that is a part of her, *sewn* into her in a sense, and would be difficult to ever remove from her. Labels that can fade with time can be connected to the *introverted* label. Salander's evolution throughout the novel and one of Larsson's final expositions at the end is how she becomes more extroverted (516). Other labels used to describe Salander are *put on* and *peeled off*, such as the use of *retarded*. This label is used in many situations, and it is often where other characters do not delve deeper into Salander as a person (38, 188, 209) and fail to notice the unusual individual that she is.

Lisbeth's creation is an amalgamation of many different labels that are given to the reader as character traits. These labels, such as *prickly and irksome*, *introverted*, *retarded* (Larsson 38, 150, 209) are used often and reasserted throughout the book. Martin and Simms state that Salander is the proverbial "diminutive hacker genius" (8), or a "genial, tattooed, more or less asocial, assertive computer hacker 'good helper'" (47) as Coppock adds. These are basic identity clues that Larsson repeats to show that some labels cannot be removed. These are the ones that Lisbeth cannot throw away, and are a part of her underlying, and visually unseen, intelligence and morality.

Labels: Pippi and Lisbeth

Larsson himself connected the original idea of Lisbeth Salander to Sweden's best known, red-headed feminist, Pippi Longstocking, by questioning what Pippi would be like in the 21st century; a world where Big Brother is around every corner, and the demands of conformatism are even more embedded in some societies. How would she react to everyday life in the mediated and jacked-up world we live in? And who would she become, a doctor, an astronaut, a CEO? And where would we find her? The fol-

lowing is from one of the few interviews with Larsson as to his thoughts on this unique character.

> Mr. Larsson especially liked the idea of a grown-up Pippi, a dysfunctional girl, probably with attention deficit disorder, who would have had a hard time finding a place in society but would nonetheless take a firm hand in directing her own destiny. That musing led to the creation of Lisbeth Salander, the central character in Mr. Larsson's trilogy. (Ryan 2010)

In this brief explanation Larsson, one sees the labels he utilized to define a very traditional Swedish children's character. The labels used here carry meaning beyond what is expected and can be unexpected for some. By referring to two clinical terms *dysfunctional* and *ADD*, Larsson tells the reader in this interview that the character, Pippi, is not acting within societal expectations, in other words she is not normal. Nor is she attentive to what is happening, she is possibly behaving as though she was in a fantasy world.

> As a comparison between*The Girl with the Dragon* Tattoo, as well as any one of the Pippi Longstocking novels, one can connect several traits between Pippi Longstocking and Lisbeth Salander. Pippi's unrequited need to just get things done, as well as her stand-fastness to truth and understanding, with a genuine belief in that sometimes laws don't apply, has a tell-tale thread that can be followed between her and Lisbeth Salander (Larsson 309 – 311, 338; Lindgren 13 – 14, 87 – 88).

From Pippi's labels to Salander's obsessive like tendencies for knowledge (Martin & Simms 10 – 14), we see Salander basing so much of her existence on this knowledge notonly for her survival, Lisbeth uses this knowledge as her identity; without knowledge she cannot find truth and *know* (Larsson 41 – 44; Lindgren 38, 87 – 89) or can she have the control she needs. Truth and understanding are keywords here, as they apply to Pippi as well as Salander, although in different ways. For Pippi knowledge is self-evident in right and wrong, she exudes adult-like common sense (Lindgren 50, 74, 78), yet she is always considered a child in her childish actions. With Lisbeth though, the internet is her gateway to knowledge, which is built upon truth and understanding. As much as the internet is a mine-field of truth and inaccuracies ever blending and merging, she has an inherent awareness and a clear understanding of both parts (218 – 222).

Labels: Larsson's Lisbeth

According to one source, as of March 2012 there are approximately 7.9 billion web pages of all types (de Kunder 2012) including personal, governmental, business, shopping and the social media sites. Salander is at home in the computer age, and shows the reader that she is aware of the deeper meaning of information, "Knowledge is power" (308). This is the core element of her identity that Larsson instils in her.

Larsson also bestows on her the inherent ability to find knowledge and information, and more importantly the ability to extrapolate and give meanings to what she finds. Larsson reveals more of Lisbeth the adult, by exposing important events during her childhood.

As an only child, and one that has grown up in the (social service) system in Sweden, Lisbeth will never fully divulge herself of some labels. Her character can be seen as always alone and mostly in control, yet never fully (148 – 152) in the book, although her evolution in the two following books finds a definite change and is left for a future discussion. In *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, Lisbeth anticipates being judged by others, and as experience has taught her, she expects that she will not be accepted, and this catalyst leads her to consciously decide which label(s) is to be used and when, to her they are interchangeable and part of her.

> She took the rings out of her eyebrows and nostril, put on a pale pink lipstick, and examined herself in the bathroom mirror. She looked like any other woman out for a weekend stroll, and she regarded her outfit as appropriate camouflage for an expedition behind enemy lines. (96 – 97)

Her choice is a combination of Punk and Goth, yet the excerpt above tells the reader that she is aware of the need to fit in and conform at times and for specific reasons. Lisbeth's personal choice is the punk culture and what that label denotes, one of self-freedom with its core in anti-establishment and anti-authoritarian view of society without a government or political authority; everyone is responsible for themselves. She also retains a slight gothic influence. This label relates to the dark, black era of the 19th century, where vampires, ghosts and the supernatural found its birth in such writers as E. A. Poe, Mary Shelly, and Bram Stoker. As punk and Goth labels are identity markers that are intertwined the connotation is that she is of a dark nature, and ready to rebel.

Labels: Cyber Hacker

The cyberpunk culture is a new and often misunderstood one, as others, it too has several sub-cultures. Salander has grown up as a part of this culture and in Jones' Hyper-punk: Cyberpunk and Information Technology he refers to Sterling's explanation:

> The cyberpunks are perhaps the first SF generation to grow up not only within the literary tradition of science fiction but in a truly science-fictional world. For them, the techniques of classical "hard SF" —extrapolation, technological literacy—are not just literary tools but an aid to daily life. They are a means of understanding, and highly valued. (xi)

Being an only child, at the time when the Internet was making its introduction to the world, makes it likely that Lisbeth would be drawn to a vast wellspring of knowledge that is open to all. Yet, her experience tells her to judge this information for herself,

rather than be told, as to what is right/wrong, good/bad, or even acceptable/unacceptable. It is no coincidence that the World Wide Web is the place where Lisbeth can spend her time. It becomes Salander's backyard and playground and is a catalyst to her life and of her creation by Larsson. In one sense, the Internet is the safe area, or home, where she feels most secure (104 – 106). Salander is a product of the Internet and its evolution; it is the environment she wants around her. It is the superhighway to everywhere that she utilizes. It is also the wormhole to any-*when*, as the internet is full of old, forgotten webpages that are never deleted. Larsson makes use of this link to the past to give Salander a heightened sense of internet in which to build a background from the early 1920's onward. This is a virtual place, and Salander embodies the hacker label, and hence, calls it home.

Sherry Turkle in her book *The Second Self*, explains the label *hackers* and how they evolve and become "individuals who have made computers a way of life" (quoted in Barnes 2001 195). Turkle also notes that it is mastery of the object, the computer, which is the aim of the hacker. Salander considers herself one of, if not the best, in all of Sweden and tells the reader that she is even better than Rogue (328) whom was her mentor, she has surpassed him and mastered the machine. Jordon and Taylor, in their work on the hacker culture, give further insight into the hacker culture from the 1990's (1998). Jordon and Taylor go on to write

> Hackers are often pathologised as obsessed, isolated young men. The alien nature of online life allows people to believe hackers more easily communicate with machines than humans, despite hackers' constant use of computers to communicate with other humans. Fear of the power of computers over our own lives underpins this terror. The very anonymity that makes their community difficult to study, equally makes hackers an easy target for pathologising. (775)

Yet, if this evident today where does Lisbeth Salander fit in? Hackers, as many other cultures, have their own societal make-up. Types of hackers, labelled as *hats*, include but are not exclusive to white, green, blue, red, and black and all of which have different meanings based on symbolic colours. A very simplified breakdown of these is,

> White Hats — helpful, and works for the general good. Is seen to work for companies and governments breaking into systems to help find holes other hackers could exploit.
>
> Green Hats — are those who have newly come to hacking as an interest or to be a part of the culture, they are "green".
>
> Blue Hats — those who have a need for revenge, these hackers usually have patience, yet, when they feel that someone or some company/government has done them wrong they will do their utmost for retributions sake.
>
> Red Hats — are those who are employed by governments or companies to exploit other governments and companies with the aim of creating havoc or disabling them.

> Black Hats — are those who do damagefor damages sake. Some see their work as a necessity for balancing the powers that be; others see their work as a type of testing of their skills. (Jordon and Taylor 1998)

As Salander matured, her experiences led her to personify these types of hats. Some she discarded after usage for specific reasons (green), where others were worn and interchanged when the situation demanded it; white for work or blue for her own reasons.

Labels: Super-hero

Salander is able to find the information and make sense of it, to be able to see the tendrils connecting all the different pieces into a cohesive single meaning. Understanding the Internet as an entity is not always easy. In Taylor's *HACKERS Cyberpunks or microserfs?* (1998) he reviews how hackers were traditionally written when they were in their infancy in literature from 1984. This literature connected the label hacker to the stereotypical, *Star Trek* melding of the always logical Mr. Spock and individualist and sometimes the "end justifies the means" (Erdmann & Block 3) Captain Kirk; adding to this there is the traditional Robin Hood trait. Hackers here, would be "in a futuristic guise as anarchic, mercenary and technically savvy mavericks who seek (with generally limited success) to reappropriate the technology of advanced capitalism for their own ends" (402). Salander can be seen as embodying the label of Robin Hood. Taking from the rich (523 – 530) and distributing the wealth where she sees fit, as well as being judge and jury by dispersing justice as needed (210, 238 –246).

This ability to understand such a multitude of conflicting parts can be equated to an almost super-human ability, but there is another piece of Lisbeth that makes this possible, she has an eidetic memory (394). With this knowledge the reader can easily connect her to some type of super-human, or super-heroine. As with most superheroes, the need for anonymity is tantamount. On her travels on the information super-highway, Salander gives away only one marker for her identity (546), her nom de plume in this world is *Wasp*. Keeping its secret is important to her, as it is to any other superhero for example Barbara Gordon (*Bat Girl*), Diana Prince (*Wonder Woman*) or in this case Janet Von Dyne (*Wasp*).

As with the original super-hero labelled Wasp, Salander has equivalent super powers beyond her memory that can be linked to each other. The Marvel Comics superhero could change size, small to large, and fly through the air. Here Lisbeth is of diminutive stature, yet her Gothic and Punk looks are larger than life (214). Lisbeth can metaphorically fly through the internet, going almost anywhere — including through firewalls. Lastly, Lisbeth's ability to use technology, and gadgets to her advantage. The sting of the original Wasp can be acutely connected to the sting of a taser and 75,000 volts of electricity going through a body that Salander uses without hesitation (238). Larsson has chosen these labels holding deeper information and meaning for those readers knowledgeable within this genre.

Through Salander's knowledge she has power, and this grows throughout the no-

vel. This power lets her walk in different cultures, conveniently connect wisps of information unseen by others, and have a beneficial effect on those she deems worthy enough to help. Salander wishes to remain the anonymous hero, without connection to any benevolent results of her actions, yet still know the results of her actions are those she expected them to be. She is an enigma in this first book, and her awkwardness is well set by Larsson by describing her early on as fitting in as well as "a buffalo at a boat show" (34). As a super-hero, Lisbeth Salander evolves into a traditional positive heroine, helping clear the male protagonist; not because she was asked or coerced, but because she felt it was the right thing to do. Salander then goes beyond this, managing monetary retribution for him by using her powers and knowledge of the internet and its financial world (542 – 545).

Stieg Larsson created a character that is difficult to define. Lisbeth Salander is labelized throughout this book helping readers connect with a complicated character, one that is reluctant to open up and be known through traditional character interaction, exposition and story actions. By using labels, Larsson gives the reader a veritable cornucopia of information to consider and possibly identify with. The way in which Larsson wrote *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* places the burden upon the reader, where the reader must look deeper at these labels, and be willing to attain knowledge about the multitude of cultures that they are connected to, and understand the vast meanings that are exploited.

Note

1. All Page numbers given in parenthesis with no authorial connection are connected to Larsson, Stieg, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* as stated in the works cited list.

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Life and Death in the Poetry of Tomas Tranströmer

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Abstract Life and death are two sides of the same coin; it is on the boundary between them that art is created. My article discusses the relationship between life and death in Tomas Tranströmer's poetry. It demonstrates that his concrete images provide access to the imminence and reality of death while at the same time preserving its mysterious nature. Tranströmer's poems can act as agents of change, enabling readers to breach the wall of conventional thinking and regard death from a variety of perspectives.
Key words death; life; water; boundary

Life and death are not opposites but two sides of the same coin. Living and dying depend on each other; they are, in fact, the other's condition (Smith 1). Whichever face of the coin is up, life and death belong together. This article discusses the representation of the symbiotic relationship between life and death in the poetry of Nobel Prize winner Tomas Tranströmer.[1] Praised for their "*condensed, translucent images*" *that give us* "*fresh access to reality*" (www.nobelprize.org/), Tranströmer's poems are created at the boundary between life and death: life hovers just above the surface; death lurks below, threatening to flood its banks at any moment. Tranströmer's poems can act as agents of change, waking us up and opening "a breach in the wall of conventional thinking and seeing".[2] By emphasising the close proximity of death, they have the potential to change our view of life. While the first part of the article examines the representation of different views of life and death in Tranströmer's poems, the final part focuses on the poet's awareness of the ever-closer proximity of death.

For Tranströmer, life and death make up a language as they converge; separately, they are mere words without context or meaning. This idea is expressed in "From March 1979":

> Weary of all who come with words, words but no language
> I make my way to the snow-covered island.
> The untamed has no words.
> The unwritten pages spread out on every side!
> I come upon tracks of deer in the snow.

Language but no words (134).[3]

Death is an unwritten page, but when viewed from the other side, from life, it has a language that can be deciphered if one only has the imagination.

Tranströmer's poems give voice to a subject that was taboo in the twentieth century. This is changing; the first years of the twenty-first century have seen a proliferation of research on human mortality and the introduction of a number of academic programmes on death and dying, not to mention a spate of cinematic interpretations of dying and the afterlife.[4] Poetry is a narrative of death that enables us to recognise our mortality and assess the existential value of life projects (Wilmott 661); through it, death can be recognised as an ally.

1. Death as a Rite of Passage

Tomas Tranströmer's poems are produced in a world that is secularised, and from which the western God is seen to have departed (Baudrillard 4) or is dead (Bruce 12) rendering the concept of death even more critical because it is no longer the preserve of divinity. What happens after death takes on a new importance: it is no longer the final frontier but a transition to other destinations, even a natural doorway to other lives. Death as it is portrayed in Tranströmer's poems is a rite of passage that brings about a change of place and state[5]; it is ritualised by society in recognition of entrance into a new status that marks the passage from the kingdom of life to the kingdom of death (Turner 1967 95).

This passage incorporates liminality: that is, the state of being ambiguous, of being "betwixt and between all fixed points of classification" (Turner 1974 232). The passenger or "liminar" must pass through a symbolic domain that bears no relation to his or her past or future state. While the poet does not have special knowledge about death, his or her words and images have a unique power to stimulate the imagination and heighten awareness of the nature and implications of death for the living; in so doing, they give rise to a new view of the value of life.

Talking about death encourages meaningful speculation on what follows. It is not the purpose of the present article to debate Tranströmer's philosophy or the presence of God in his poetry; this has been done elsewhere.[6] Rather, I wish to discuss a variety of perspectives on death in Tranströmer's poems, from his earliest collection, *17 Poems* (1954), to his latest, *The Great Enigma* (2004). In terms of subject, Tranströmer follows in a grand tradition. In the Bible, we are reminded that there is "a time to be born and a time to die" (Ecclesiastes 3.1). Famous poets such as Thomas Gray ("Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard", 1751), Percy Bysshe Shelley ("Ozymandias", 1817) and Edgar Allen Poe ("The Conqueror Worm", 1843) have addressed the inevitability and nature of death.[7] Among philosophers, death has long been recognised as "the true inspiring genius or the muse of philosophy" (Schopenhauer 249). Among sociologists, it is regarded as a phenomenon lying within our fantasies and dreams, our language and metaphor (Kearl 6). Death is one of life's greatest mysteries (Bergsten 19 and 361). Tranströmer's poems provide unique insights into death, combining the knowledge of the psychologist (Tranströmer

has a degree in psychology and has worked with juvenile offenders) with an extraordinary ability to make the abstract concrete. Death is part of life as it blows like the wind under the wings of a bird (Tranströmer "Haiku 11" 199), propelling us forwards until the final journey.[8] Tranströmer's collections of poems represent a journey in which the presence of death is felt ever more acutely.[9]

2. Death and Its Representation

Finitude, as one critic has noted, is ungraspable because "the event of our death is always too late for us" (Critchley 26). A phenomenology of death is impossible because no adequate intention or intuitive fulfilment can be identified. Simon Critchley thus concludes that "Death is radically resistant to the order of representation. Representations of death are misrepresentations or rather representations of an absence" (27). While poets have no greater knowledge of death than other human beings, they have a special ability to stimulate the imagination. Experiential patterns — patterns of experience that relate to the poet's or the reader's and which correspond exactly with what the poem is saying — present a picture of reality as seen by the poet.[10] This requires a positioning, adjusted to the quarter of an inch, of shadows and light, creating a new dimension that clarifies the layer of experience on which it is based (Julén 2 – 3). Tranströmer is a master of the art. His images are like explosions that change reality; we can hold on to them because they are situated in a time or place with which we can identify (Torhamn 799). The unbelievable takes on qualities of its own that makes it real.

Tranströmer specialises in expressing what appears to be inexpressible, a technique that he develops both in "range and interest" throughout his career, "as the circumstances acquire a wider social and historical significance and as the personality of the narrator becomes more explicitly revealed" (Fulton 109). The factual precision of Tranströmer's poetry (which always starts at a particular geographical point),[11] combined with what one critic has described as a special "visionary insight" (Warme 395), enables Tranströmer to transform the abstract into something resembling the concrete and particular. Death *appears* to become real because it is treated as such.[12] The challenge for the reader is to identify the patterns of experience and relate these to his own.

Tranströmer has defined his mission as a poet "to be where I am. / Even in that ridiculous, deadly serious/ role — I am the place/where creation is working itself out" ("The Outpost" 100[13]). Here, the "I" of the poem portrays itself as a corpse that has crawled out of a "heap of stones". He flies like a spirit at the command of an unidentified authority, is neither man nor spirit but a place and is in the past and the future: "Coming events, they're there already!" They are not "here", they are "there". The "I" of the poem is a turnstile through which all must pass. It is not clear if the path leads to the kingdom of life or death; perhaps it is somewhere in between. The crowd is eager to enter but the "I" of the poem is "anxious" and "confused". He has been given the task of selecting those who are eligible to enter the new kingdom. The travellers are presented with two options: to remain outside or pass through the turnstile. In order to make a choice, we must accept the experience en-

capsulated in the poem as authentic; it is experienced not only by the poet himself but as something of relevance to all.[14] The poems discussed here are like the turnstile of "The Outpost": we can enter — or we can remain outsiders. The choice is ours. To enter is to discover a new world that we can re-form to our own and understand as we see fit; it is a place where we meet the universal, as the "I" of the poem goes down through his own psyche "before moving outside of himself to others in the world" (Whiting 67).

The "others" include the unseen, the dead who frequently populate Tranströmer 's poems. They try to communicate and even desire to move in the human world:

> Overheard horizon. They want to say something, the dead.
> They smoke but don't eat, they don't breathe but still have their voices.
> I'll be hurrying through the streets like one of them.
> The blackened cathedral, heavy as moon, causes ebb and flow ("Deep in Europe", 154).

The dead are the other side of the horizon, equipped with voices that carry no sound even though the horizon itself is "overheard". The "I" of the poem identifies with the dead, he is like them, but alas, he cannot give them a voice.

The dead who have crossed the frontier also feature in the short prose text "How the Late Autumn Night Novel Begins":

> Stethoscope noises from a slow heart, it beats, goes silent for a time, comes back. As if the creature were moving in a zigzag across the Frontier. Or someone knocking in a wall, someone who belongs to the other world but was left behind here, knocking, wanting back. Too late. Couldn't get down there, couldn't get up there, couldn't get aboard . . . The other world is this world too (119).

Here, not only the voice but even the heart is "silent". The "Frontier" is capitalised to denote that the dead belong to another kingdom. It seems that the Frontier is impenetrable; neither can it be circumnavigated. And yet in the end, the two worlds become one. That this is an impenetrable mystery is emphasised by the addition of the three dots.

In "From the Winter of 1947", the dead are living and demand their likeness to be reproduced. What do they hope to achieve? Whom do they ask? Is it the poet himself, perhaps?

I read in books of glass but saw only the other:

> the stains pushing through the wallpaper.
> It was the living dead
> who wanted their portraits painted . . . (121)

There is a transparency in language if we are prepared to open our eyes. We are, however, easily distracted as the stains of the dead push relentlessly through the wall-paper. Are the creatures more alive than dead? one wonders. They seek preservation in art. Again, the three dots denote that the process of reproduction is a mystery. The "I" of the poem can offer no solution but raises an important existential question about the importance for the living of commemorating the dead.

As a writer, Tranströmer asserts, it is necessary to be both eagle and mole: "But the writer is halfway into his image, there/ he travels, at the same time eagle and mole" ("The Journey's Formulae" 50); he must have a wide panorama from which to select details (the eagle) and be sensitive to a blind underground life that is always at work beneath our human creations (the mole).[15] This is a never-ending project: "He who has arrived has a long way to go" ("From an African Diary"); for each new poem that he writes, the "I" must first shrink before it can be "hatched":

> Fantastic to feel how my poem grows
> while I myself shrink.
> It grows, it takes my place.
> It pushes me aside.
> It throws me out of the nest.
> The poem is ready (75).

The process resembles life: when an individual has reached maturity, he or she is extinguished in order to make room for another. The effort is not wasted because it results in new life, new perspectives, and new hope.

3. **Selected Poems** (1954 – 2004): **Life and Death, a Chronological Analysis**

Death is mentioned in Tranströmer's first published poem, "Prelude". It is likened to the first hours of consciousness as one wakes in the morning:

> In day's first hours consciousness can grasp the world
> as the hand grips a sun-warmed tree.
> The traveller is standing under the tree. After
> the crash through death's turbulence, shall
> a great light unfold above his head?

The concrete image of the tree, and the crashing through its branches, are both graspable and accessible. Death is not quiet and cannot go unnoticed. But what of the afterlife, one wonders? It is unclear if we can expect guidance on the other side of the final sleep that is death. Light, perhaps in the form of the sun or moon, may or may not be there when we arrive in the new kingdom. The effect of the poem is visionary rather than realistic. The awakening of the traveller has religious undertones of a resurrection.[16] It is a rite of passage whose consequences are left to the reader's imagination.

"Postludium", published twenty-nine years after "Prelude" (in *The Wild Mar-*

ket-Square), presents a different picture of death. As Niklas Schiöler has noted, the vertical drop of "Prelude" is replaced in "Postludium" with a horizontal dragging. The morning of "Prelude" becomes night in "Postludium" (Schiöler 45 – 46). The light that is in question in the earlier poem is present in the later one, in the form of moonlight:

> I drag like a grapnel over the world's floor —
> everything catches that I don't need.
> Tired indignation. Glowing resignation.
> The executioners fetch stone. God writes in the sand.
>
> Silent rooms.
> The furniture stands in the moonlight, ready to fly.
> I walk slowly into myself
> through a forest of empty suits of armour. (141)

Death is a much stronger presence in "Postludium", and it is more threatening than in the earlier poem. It comes at the end of a lifetime of accumulating the "wrong" things, which only brings one closer to the inevitable. The executioners are God's servants, carrying out His will. The vision is made concrete by the description of "silent rooms". We die alone. Before we do so, we slowly re-live our previous existence as we travel back in time through a series of earlier identities ("suits of armour") that are hollow. The "turbulence" of "Prelude" is nothing like as frightening as the slow retreat into oneself of "Preludium". The poem is a reminder of the importance of living one's life well and to the full.

Published in the same collection of poems as "Postludium", "Brief Pause in the Organ Recital" offers a ray of hope. Comparing life with an encyclopedia that is written throughout life, the "I" of the poem reminds the reader that there is air between the pages.

> But each one of us has his own encyclopedia written, it grows out of each soul,
> it's written from birth onwards, the hundreds of thousands of pages stand pressed
> against each other
> and yet with air between them! (134)

In the space, it is possible to write new pages as we follow the promptings of our soul. Nothing happens by chance, as "the pictures retouch themselves" and "the words flicker". God may have written in the sand, as "Postludium" suggests, but we are not helpless: we have a chance to write our story. While the outcome is inevitable, the journey to our final destination is to some extent ours to control. This is why "our book" is full of "contradictions" ("Brief Pause in the Organ Recital"). We do

not have the overall "eagle" view of our lives, we can, and indeed must, work at the ground level of the mole.

The encyclopedia of "Brief Pause in the Organ Recital" is replaced by a diary in "Black Picture-Postcards" (*The Wild Market-Square*): "The diary written full, future unknown". The sea is "lead-still", like a coffin lid and "Shadows wrestle on the pier" resembling dead men with no future. As Niklas Schiöler has noted (53), the picture is reminiscent of the River Styx that separates the world of the living from the dead and wraps around the underworld nine times. The process towards death is gradual, beginning in middle age. Death's visit as described by the "I" of the poet is a preparation for the crossing of the boundary marked by the river. It seems that our destiny is already shaped in the first half of our life because, once we are measured, the suit will fit irrespective of how many years elapse before we die. We do not need to make any changes; we can — and indeed will — forget the occurrence:

> In the middle of life it happens that death comes
> and takes man's measurements. The visit
> is forgotten and life goes on. But the suit
> is sewn on the quiet (140).

The fact that death's visit is "forgotten" suggests at least some Level of awareness on the part of the one who is visited — and yet the process of making the suit is carried out "on the quiet", indicating that secrecy is required. How do we know when we have been visited? Will we know when our death garment is complete? There are no answers, of course, making the knowledge of death bearable.

Death, however, is never far away. In "Carillon", also published in *The Wild Market-Square*, it lurks below the surface of life. The "I" of the poem declares, "I have low beaches, if death rises six inches I shall be flooded" (144). This is part of the "inconceivable that will nevertheless happen" (144) because the "I" is on the border between land and water, life and death (Schiöler 22). The exact measurement of six inches lends authenticity to the poem. It is not clear if the measurement applies only to the "I" of the poem or to people in general: are some closer to the limit? Do some require a greater level of flooding? What causes the water level to rise? How fast does it rise? Does it rise without warning? The water is part of "the great unknown", which is infinitely more important than the "I" of the poem. For this reason, the "I" acknowledges that he cannot expect any answers to his questions. He can only wait.

In the meantime, he reflects on the fact that there have been other options in the past. The "irrevocable choices" he has made and describes in "The Blue House" (*The Wild Market-Square* 138) are a cause for regret: "I miss the alternatives. The sketches, all of them, want to become real". The "sister ship" that is our alternative life follows another route, away from the chosen life. Would this life have led to a different kind of death, which might perhaps have occurred at another time? The sun that blazes behind the islands in the final line represents the setting of the life that has been conditioned by the "irrevocable choices" made earlier — but now forgotten.

4. The Later Poems: Approaching the Boundary between Life and Death

"Streets in Shanghai", published six years later in the collection *For Living and Dead*, provides a specific location that illustrates the fearless honesty of the "I" of the poem. While the Chinese around him have eight faces "for every situation, for the avoidance of mistakes" (152), the "I" of the poem is not ashamed to admit that he is "an old tree with withered leaves that hang on and can't fall to the earth" (153). Published just one year before Tranströmer suffered a stroke, the poem anticipates death. The leaves will fall off. They are like receipts for everything the "I" has done, thought or bought. It takes only "a puff of air from the sea" to make them "rustle" (153). The distance between the branches and the leaves is not great; and when the wind of death blows, it will be closed for ever.

As a result, it becomes even more important to heighten one's awareness of the value of life. This is made particularly clear in "Romanesque Arches" (*For Living and Dead* 158). The Romanesque church is packed with tourists who have come to admire the great vaults. Their view is obstructed, however. The "I" of the poem focuses not on the church but the vision of an angel, who embraces him and fills his body with the message of the poem: "Don't be ashamed of being human, be proud! / Inside you vault opens behind vault endlessly. / You will never be complete, that's how it's meant to be" (158). Why should the "I" of the poem be ashamed of being human? In life, only some of the vaults inside us will open up; only part of our potential will be realised. This can be read as a promise that on the last day, all vaults will be opened as one crosses the frontier from life to death. The sun that greets the "I" of the poet as he leaves the church and enters the piazza reminds him that he is still alive and that there is hope. He also has the reassurance that there is more to be revealed, more to be discovered both within himself and in the environment about the kingdom that awaits him.

This reassurance continues as he describes old age in the prose poem "The Cuckoo" (171) in the collection "The Sad Gondola" that follows "For Living and Dead". The "I" no longer wishes to make journeys; indeed, he does not need to do so, because, as he explains, "the journey visits me". Age, symbolised by the multiplying "annual growth-rings", backs him into a corner, from which there can be only one exit: death. His sight is failing; he needs reading glasses not only to read by but to interpret the signs that are all around him but are fading. This does not worry him, however, because he accepts his situation. Nothing surprises him anymore. His thoughts are a source of comfort and strength because they never fail him, bearing him "as faithfully as Susi and Chutma bore Livingstone's embalmed body right through Africa". They will follow him from life into death, bridging the boundary between the two kingdoms.[17]

The image of the boundary is repeated in "Midwinter", "where dead people/ are smuggled over the border" (177). It is in the mind, and consists of a small crack. It is not clear why the dead must be smuggled: Perhaps the "I" of the poem visualises an alternative border that exists only for those who have the necessary imagination. Perhaps this is for the dead who are not eligible to cross the regular border

because they have not been summoned or because they have taken their own life. Crossing the border is associated with shame and dishonesty; death has not followed its natural path.

Death takes time. Its kingdom must be approached slowly and with reverence. In "A Sketch from 1844", the advance is described as a slow wading down into the kingdom. One is reminded of the previously discussed "Carillon" and the slow rising of the water of death by six inches. In the earlier poem, death rises up to meet the living; in "A Sketch from 1844", the living must wade out into death. For the artist, the wading process is a productive one as it generates new life in the form of art (Schiöler 79). The "I" of the poet visualises William Turner setting up his easel among the breakers. The silver-green cable that goes down into the depths can be followed by all, represented by the "we" of the poem; not everyone, however, can create art: only "he" who wades out into the sea can do that.

And so it is with the last poem to be discussed, "Eagle Rock", in Tranströmer's final collection, *The Great Enigma*. As Schiöler notes, life and death change places as the soul of the "I" of the poem retreats underground (94). The concreteness of Tranströmer's images and the compactness of his language are illustrated clearly in this poem, which is quoted in full below:

> Behind the vivarium glass
> the reptiles
> unmoving.
>
> A woman hangs up washing
> in the silence.
> Death is becalmed.
>
> In the depths of the ground
> my soul glides
> silent as a comet. (181)

The living death, represented by the "unmoving" reptiles locked in their vivarium and the woman surrounded by silence, is more alive than dead; the creative soul of the "I" of the poem has retreated underground but retains its power as it continues to glide smoothly and unimpeded. The comparison of the soul with a comet is significant. In the first paragraph of his memoir *Memories Look at Me*, the narrator compares his life with a comet: the brightest end is childhood; the nucleus is infancy, which determines the most important features of our life; the longest part is adulthood (3). At the age of sixty, the narrator observes that he is "now far out in the comet's tail" (3). It is not this part, however, but the first two that are especially dangerous because they constitute the origins of death. In trying to recall them, the "I" of the poem observes, "it feels as if I am coming close to death itself" (3). The comet, the soul and death join in the work of art, which alone can transcend death. "Eagle Rock" returns to the image of the eagle and mole of "The Journey's Formulae"

(50): the first two stanzas are viewed from above, the final one, from below. The "I" of the poem is "halfway into his image" (50), positioned somewhere between above and below — between life and death.

5. Final Words

Not only are life and death two sides of the same coin, it is in their meeting that art is born. The boundary between life and death is thin and fragile, and sometimes the two conditions change places. Tranströmer's poems can act as agents of change as they challenge the reader to examine his lifestyle and accept the inevitable. They enable us to breach the wall of conventional thinking and seeing. The concreteness of Tranströmer's images makes the concept of death graspable while at the same time maintaining its mysterious nature.

Death plays an increasingly important role in Tranströmer's poetry. The crash and turbulence of death in the "Prelude" give way in the later poems to the image of death as a slow and inevitable process that either lurks below the surface or invites us to wade gradually into his depths. Death is no longer frightening but as inevitable as the wind under the bird's wings or the coming of the autumn and the withering of leaves. As the bird flies by or as the leaves drop, and as the "I" of the poem is chucked out of the nest, wades out into the depths of death or allows his soul to glide in the underworld, life and death meet — and new life is born. Forty years of writing have resulted in one of the shortest but most important collections of poetry of the twentieth century. Through Tranströmer's poems, we are given the opportunity to access the reality of life and death and visualise the crossing from the one state to the other.

Notes

1. Tomas Tranströmer's poems have been translated into more than 60 languages. He is regarded as Scandinavia's most important poet since World War Two. In addition to winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2011, Tranströmer has won a variety of awards, including the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in the US, the Bonner Award for Poetry, Germany's Petrarch Prize, the Bellman Prize, the Swedish Academy's Nordic Prize, and the August Prize. See Bloodaxe Books: Author Page > Tomas Transtromer at http://www.bloodaxebooks.com/personpage.asp? author = Tomas + Transtromer. Accessed on February 11th, 2012. 2. See also Tomas Tranströmer, *Selected Poems*, edited and translated by Robin Fulton (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis Press, 1981), 158.

3. All quotations from Tranströmer's poems are, unless otherwise stated, taken from *Tomas Tranströmer. New Collected Poems* edited by Robin Fulton (Tarset, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2011).

4. Raymond, L. M. Lee, "Modernity, Mortality and Re-Enchantment: The Death Taboo Revisited". *Sociology* 42, 2008, 745 – 759.

5. This is Arnold van Gennep's definition and refers to a transition from one state or realm to another during which the passage is consummated. See Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*. Translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1909.

6. Jenifer Whiting, "The Recognition of Faith in the Poetry of Tomas Tranströmer". *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 4, 2004, 65 – 79. Whiting concludes that "Tomas Tranströmer is a unique kind of secular poet, who clearly sees himself within the active framework of God's creation. . . . Faith is something that the poet comes to through encounters in the physical world,

through the senses, in a series of recognitions that bring the poet and his readers face-to-face with their uniqueness, and that confront poet and readers with the miracle of our skins, bones, possibilities. In each of these recognitions of preciousness and faith, whether prompted by the holy unseen, the self, nature, or other human beings, Tranströmer creates a series of small, enclosed moments of realization, moments that unfailingly reveal this message: our search is not in vain, we live, breathe, and help embody the simple beauty of God everyday — even if the train is late and the lines are long" (78).

7. See Robert F. Weir (ed.), *Death in Literature.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 1 – 42, for a review of poetry and prose addressing the inevitability of death.

8. This idea is presented in the last haiku in Tranströmer's final collection of poems, *The Great Enigma*.

9. Niklas Schiöler notes the increasing importance of death in Tranströmer's poetry, *Ledstången I Mörkret* (*The Banister in the Darkness*) (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2011), 25.

10. In his introduction to Tranströmer's *The Half-Finished Heaven* (Minneapolis MN: Graywolf Press, 2001), Robert Bly notes that Tranströmer's poems faithfully preserve "the link to the worldly occasion" that has prompted it (p. ix).

11. Tomas Tranströmer, *Selected Poems*, 155.

12. Urban Torhamn argues that Tranströmer's precise style and detailed descriptions make the unreal real, enabling the poet to treat his subject as something already in existence even if it is, in fact, unreal. See Urban Torhamn, "Tomas Tranströmers Poetiska Metod" (Tomas Tranströmer's Poetic Method), in Swedish. *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* 10, 1961, 799 – 803.

13. This poem was written while Tranströmer was a young soldier. He was sent to a remote location on a military exercise. The poem is the result of daydreaming. While playing with words for fun he suddenly became serious, expressing the situation as follows: "That's a kind of religious experience which recurs here and there in my poems of late, that I see a kind of meaning in being present, in using reality, in experiencing it, in making something of it. And I have an inkling that I'm doing this on some sort of task or commission" (Tomas Tranströmer, *Selected Poems*, 162).

14. Staffan Bergsten, *Den Trösterika Gåtan. Tio Essåer om Tomas Tranströmers Lyrik* (*The Consoling Mystery*). Stockholm: FIB:s Lyrikklubb, 1989, 11.

15. See Robin Fulton, "The Poetry of Tomas Tranströmer", 115.

16. See Birgitta Steene, "Vision and Reality in the Poetry of Tomas Tranströmer", *Scandinavian Studies* 37, 1965, 236 – 244.

17. A similar idea is expressed in Bei Dao's poem "Old Places" in which the kingdom of death lies behind our own picture. The only ones who are able to cross the border between life and death are angels, who collect taxes from the living. The latter can cross the boundary only once, and only after they have paid their taxes. Bei Dao, *The Rose of Time* ed. by Eliot Weinberger (New York: New Directions, 2010), 161. Bei Dao and Tomas Tranströmer are friends. See "Chinese Writers Cheer Swedish Poet's Nobel Win" at http://tomastranstromer.net/2011/11/28/chinese-writers-cheer-swedish-poets-nobel-win/ Accessed on 20 February 2011.

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责任编辑:郑红霞

翻译《阿尼阿拉号》的诱惑和挑战

万之

内容提要:马丁松具有科幻性的史诗《阿尼阿拉号》是瑞典文学最重要的经典作品之一,由 103 首诗构成,内容丰富,风格多样而具有前卫性,被公认是翻译难度极大的作品。这种难度表现在其语言风格非常本土化和个人化,和要翻译成的目标语言形成相当大的差距甚至阻隔。诗人自创的语言词汇即使瑞典人都不懂,遑论翻译。因此翻译此作对译者其实是严重的挑战,是几无可能完成之任务,又像是一次探险,深入别人不敢涉足的领域。而对愿意做探险者的译者来说,这正是最大的诱惑。

关键词:马丁松;《阿尼阿拉号》;诱惑与挑战

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Title: Translating *Aniara*: A Temptation and a Challenge

Abstract: Harry Martinson's *Aniara*, an epic with scientific fiction character, is one of the most important classics in Swedish literature. It is composed of 103 poems with different styles and avant-guard spirit, and is regarded as a work very difficult to translate. The difficulty is first of all in that its language is very localized and personalized, with many own created words. Therefore, there is a large distance between the original language and the target language, even obstacles. Some words/ sentences are even unconceivable by Swedish readers, not to mention translators. It is almost a "mission impossible" to translate it and also like an expedition into an unknown area. For a translator who is willing to make the expedition it is certainly also a temptation.

Key words: Harry Martinson; *Aniara*; temptation and challenge

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cism, plays and literary translations. He was in many years director and editor of literary magazine *Today* and also board member of Swedish PEN and Vice President/General Secretary of Independent Chinese PEN. Email:maiping. chen@ comhem. se

《阿尼阿拉号》(*Aniara*)是瑞典诗人、小说家、散文家、剧作家哈瑞·马丁松(Harry Martinson,1904－1978)的史诗式作品,包括103首诗歌,出版于1956年。这部长诗描写人类因地球受到放射性物质毒害而无法居住,被迫乘坐飞船离开,迁移其他星球,但阿尼阿拉号飞船事故频发失去控制,脱离原定航线,乘员也束手无策,只能听任飞船在渺无尽头的茫茫太空中坠落,面临最终毁灭的命运。

如今看过《星球大战》之类科幻太空影片的人,可能已经对《阿尼阿拉号》中的太空描写司空见惯不再惊奇,但是在马丁松创作此诗的时代,人们对太空的了解还非常有限,太空让人感到神秘,因此这部诗作当时给人以想象奇特、耳目一新的感觉,是太空文学的前卫作品。

更重要的是,《阿尼阿拉号》不仅展示了诗人对自然科学的浓厚兴趣,似乎可以归类科学幻想作品,其实依然属于文学隐喻,也是对人类生存困境的思考,其副标题"对时空中的人类的一次检讨"就表现出作者这方面的用心。和当时在欧洲兴盛起来的存在主义相比较,马丁松的思考,不仅针对个人的生存危机,不仅表达人生的荒谬感,也着眼整个人类的前途和地球的命运,是对自然环境的关注,并有对极权的批判,所以具有更宽阔的视野和胸襟,也更具理性,同时又不失丰富甚至狂放的想象。而且,就诗人对地球环境的担忧,以及对人类提出警告而言,这部作品也是世界环保文学的前驱之作,故被称为卡桑德拉式的作品(卡桑德拉为古希腊神话中能预见未来灾难的人物)。在诗人看来,地球最大的灾难,来自人类自身。在第26首中他写道:

几乎一切灾害人们都会提防,
无论火灾风暴或冰霜的灾殃
算上你能够想到的任何情况。
对人类自身之害却无可抵挡。[1]

而在第100首中他又暗示,人类居住的地球本身,就是一艘将要毁灭的"阿尼阿拉号":

太空的残酷远不及人类残酷
不,人类的冷酷更无可匹敌
地球上随处可见死牢的荒凉
石头筑起高墙围困囚徒的灵魂
冷凉的石头在沉默中听到回答:

这里是人类主宰。这里是阿尼阿拉号。

《阿尼阿拉号》以其深刻的思想、宏大的结构和丰富的想象,成为瑞典文学史上一部里程碑式的诗作,在世界文学中也不可多得。甚至有评论家认为,就反映时代发展而言,它的意义相当于歌德的长诗《浮士德》。它对于瑞典文学语言美的发展也卓有贡献,使思想披上优美的外衣。而它的一百零三首诗歌风格多样。有的是韵体,有的是自由体。不仅有叙事的部分,也有富于深刻思辨的哲理诗,还有的是通俗的民歌谣曲,诙谐活泼,琅琅上口,可以谱曲而唱。事实上《阿尼阿拉号》也数度改编为音乐剧演出,最近一次是在 2010 年,颇受瑞典民众的欢迎。

《阿尼阿拉号》现在已经成为瑞典文学的经典作品,对马丁松与另一瑞典作家艾文德·雍松(Eyvind Johnson)1974 年分享诺贝尔文学奖起过重大作用,被文学评论家誉为“我们这个时代的星球之歌”。

虽然马丁松获得过诺贝尔文学奖,在瑞典文学中有重要地位,是公认的继斯特林堡之后最有影响的瑞典经典作家,《阿尼阿拉号》也是在瑞典很有影响的作品,但是在国际上马丁松及其作品知名度却不高,在中国也鲜为人知。至今为止,他还从未有一本著作翻译成中文出版,《阿尼阿拉号》自然也从未有中文译本。

有关马丁松在国际上受到冷落的原因,通常的看法有两方面:一,他的文学创作比较民族化本土化,语言有典型的瑞典本土方言特色,对任何语言的译者都不容易,所以至今为止他的作品的外文译本语种并不很多,好的译本更加少见。《阿尼阿拉号》在北欧之外的影响一直也很有限。马丁松在这部作品里还使用自创的词汇,瑞典语都无法解释,那么翻译成其它语言更加困难,何况各国懂瑞典语的译者本来不多;二,他的思想具有前卫性,而没有被同时代人理解和接受。其实,他可算是世界上最早关注环保和自然生态的作家。上世纪四十年代二次世界大战后,他就发表过很多哲学散文,提出了环保问题和生态问题,发展出一套自己的“自然哲学”理念,并借鉴中国文化中的道家思想,主张顺其自然,反对城市化和全球化。当大多数人还在赞赏和享受现代工业文明果实的时候,他就像一个卡桑德拉式的预言家,用文学形式向全人类发出生态失衡的警告,《阿尼阿拉号》实际上是这种警告的代表作。“阿尼阿拉号”的名称出自古希腊语“阿尼阿洛斯”(aniaros),意思是“遇险”或“危难中”。可惜,他也像卡桑德拉一样,对灾难的警告没有多少人相信。

翻译《阿尼阿拉号》的难度如此之大,几乎是“不可能的任务”(Mission Impossible)。最大的困难之一是马丁松在此部诗作中还使用了很多自创的和现代科学及异国文化有关而又具备抒情诗韵味的瑞典语新词汇。这些自创词汇的意义连瑞典人都未必能了解,在瑞典字典中都找不到,翻译成外语也就更加困难。例如,在第 49 首中,盲者回到自己的祖国,有这样的描写:

那里现在很冷。植被全遭破坏。
但顽强的意志坚持自己的计划
尝试用一种物质来拯救土地
这是科学发现的物质:荞参。

所谓“荞参”,原文是 Geosan,就属于诗人自己创造的新词,不要说瑞典语中不存在,任何西语字典中都不存在。对于西方译者来说,可以照搬原文,而中文则必须另想办法。译者只能创造一种中文本身没有的物质词汇来对应。在发音和音节上相似(中文发音是 Qiaoshen,两个音节),而意思上,也是一种植物或药物(“荞”来自荞麦之荞,而“参”则会让中国人联想到营养药物人参之参)。类似的还有马丁松想象出的科技词汇词汇如“伽姆舱”(gammosal)和“特贝”(Tebe)。有的词汇,是有些文化背景的,如“秘学控制台”(Goptabord)是马丁松想象的太空设备,而“秘学”(Gopta)本是梵语。

最难的可能是诗人完全自己发挥或玩弄的文字游戏,例如第 27 首中:

Kom vagga lojd och fancie, lockar Daisi
Go dorm i vansie, or gain i dondel
Min dejd är gander, jag ärv lam och gondel
Och vept i taris, gland i deld och yondel.

这一段里后三句的尾韵“dondel”、“gondel”和“yondel”,都是现在的瑞典语中没有的词汇,句法和词法都不规范,连瑞典人都解释不了,只知道这里是嘲弄的口吻。同样,西方翻译可以照搬原文,但是中文译者也只能根据大概意思和语调语气,再配上和“el”相近的北京儿化音来翻译:

过来抱一抱花一花,戴茜引诱着。
去俺的房间给俺唱个催眠曲儿
俺约会人排队俺命好得没边儿,
跟你跳舞是给你脸你别跌份儿。

此外,要保持原诗语言的新颖和优美,押韵上口可读可歌,使得译成的文本依然是诗意的文本,这也是非常不容易的。作者换韵很多,而在中国诗歌中,一诗一韵比较规范。在这种情况下,中文翻译更偏重了中文的习惯。这里就不一一举例了。

将《阿尼阿拉号》翻译成中文是译者久存心中的愿望。要忠于原诗而又使得中文译本也具有本土诗歌之美,难度确实很大,对译者无疑是一种挑战,同时

又是一种诱惑,一种探险。即使现在中文译本成书出版,并不说明译作已经达到目标,更谈不上完美无缺,只是译者庶竭驽钝,尽力而为。发表译作更能够供读者批评指缺,以便再做修订。文学翻译其实永无止境,可以不断更新,不断完善,甚至还可以推倒重来,这也正是本人作为译者,感到文学翻译趣味无穷的原因。

注解【Note】

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Reflections by a Nobel Jury Member

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Abstract The criteria governing the choices of literary Nobel prize winners are all interpretations of Nobel's will. During my thirty years in the Swedish Academy, I have experienced the interplay of several criteria. One, pointing at great innovators, resulted in laureates like Gabriel García Márquez and Claude Simon. Another, focusing upon unknown masters, gave a world-wide audience to Jaroslav Seifert and Wisława Szymborska. Realizing, in 1991, that these two criteria put prominent women writers in a blind angle, the Academy crowned Nadine Gordimer, thus ending almost half a century of negligence. A third idea, aiming at "global dissemination", picked out a line of writers from Naguib Mahfouz to Gao Xingjian (who were also innovators in their fields). A recent interest in "witness literature" gave the award to Imre Kertész and Herta Müller. The article winds up by some reflexions on political integrity and secrecy. A prize may have a political — and often unforeseeable — *effect* but it must not have a political *intention*.
Key words innovators; unknown masters; women candidates; "global dissemination"; witness; literature; politics

The criteria for the Nobel Prize in literature have changed during the thirty years that I have served as a member of the Swedish Academy and of its Nobel Committee (I became a member in 1988; for seventeen years I was its Chairman). The principles and criteria governing the decisions are all interpretations of Alfred Nobel's rather imprecise will.

Since 1946, the "the pioneers" of literature have been favoured. As with the prizes in the sciences, the focus has been on those who have paved the way for new developments; this is in accordance with Nobel's stipulation that the prize be given to those "who have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind". The first to be selected on this basis were Hermann Hesse, André Gide, T. S. Eliot, and William Faulkner, all of whom were bold innovators. The first discussion in which I took part resulted in the selection of Gabriel García Márquez, the figure-head of "magical realism" (1982). Other examples include Claude Simon, the principal character of *le nouveau roman* in France, and Naguib Mahfouz, the pioneer of the Arabic novel.

Another criterion also takes into consideration the benefit of the prize. The Academy wishes to draw attention to important but little noticed authors so as to give to the reading public masterpieces that would otherwise remain unknown to them; at the same time, new oeuvres would be given the readership they so richly deserve.

This "pragmatic" policy had a breakthrough with the 1978 prize awarded to the then totally unknown Isaac Bashevis Singer, who soon became one of the world's most widely read authors. During my time in the Academy, Jaroslav Seifert and Wisława Szymborska have been awarded the Nobel Prize, in 1984 and 1996 respectively. Both are examples of authors who were previously little known.

The two criteria mentioned above may be combined in one and the same author, the best example being William Faulkner, who received the 1949 prize (in 1950). Now recognised to be one of the great innovators of 19th century literature, a stimulus to *le nouveau roman* as well as to Latin-American "magic realism", he was little known in 1950. To my mind, this is one of the choices that showed the greatest foresight on the part of the Committee.

1991 was a critical year for the two criteria. They were found to have a blind spot. A number of the most outstanding women writers of our time have nurtured a great artistic heritage but not renewed its paradigms. At the same time, they have often appealed to a large circle of readers and gained considerable appreciation and fame — thereby falling outside the category "great though neglected writers". The Academy decided to adjust its course accordingly by giving the prize to a master who had been the victim of such injustice — Nadine Gordimer. A later example is Doris Lessing.

In the 1980s, there was a growing ambition to give the prize a "global dissemination", again in accordance with Nobel's will. The list was thus extended to include, among others, Naguib Mahfouz, Wole Soyinka, Kenzaburo Oë and Gao Xingjian, all innovators in their fields.

As an expression of recent interest in "witness literature", it was decided to give the prize to Imre Kertész, who combines strong writing with harrowing testimonies of life in a concentration camp. Another example is Hertha Müller, an exquisite artist, who testifies to the difficult situation of dissidents under Romanian dictatorship.

Drawing attention to such criteria as those outlined above can shed some light on a number of decisions. The Academy remains, however, unpredictable in its decisions.

The Swedish Academy stresses again and again that political arguments have no place in its discussions. A prize can, of course, have a political *effect* but it must not have a political *intention*. Appearances may be misleading; for instance, in 1980, the Polish poet Czesław Miłosz was awarded the prize, just two months after the strike in Danzig in August that year. In fact, Miłosz had been on the short list since May, and was at the top of the list. The question was then reversed: could he be given the prize *in spite of* the strike? The situation illustrates the fact that a *non-choice* can, in fact, be political. The Academy took the only measure possible that would safeguard the integrity of the prize.

As a member of the Committee (five members) and of the Academy (eighteen members), I sometimes find myself in the minority. I might be unsuccessful in convincing the others about the quality of a writer or I may have to give in where I am not convinced myself. This is part of the mission. In either case, I have to stand by the decision of the Committee. You never explain or justify a choice since candidates and

arguments remain classified information for fifty years.

Professional secrecy requires that you keep a straight face and reveal nothing. I recall a symposium in Lisbon in 1988 when the poet and critic Daniel Halpern took me aside to give me a piece of advice. He wanted to suggest a candidate — and here he lowered his voice — the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz. I did not by a wince reveal the fact that Mahfouz had just been shortlisted and was expected to be chosen a couple of months later. I can just imagine Halpern's reaction when he heard that Mahfouz had been awarded the prize: "I fixed it!"

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A Review on *Chickweed Wintergreen*

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Posthumously published *Chickweed Wintergreen* is the most recent publication of Nobel Prize winner Harry Martinson (1904 – 1978). Elected to the Swedish Academy in 1949, Martinson wrote four novels, six volumes of essays and nine collections of poems. His books are autobiographical, reflecting his upbringing, travels, and interest in science and social questions. His poetry is known for its close observation of the natural world as well as its intense awareness of cosmic distances in time and space.

In his introduction to *Chickweed Wintergreen*, Staffan Söderblom emphasises that Martinson interpreted not only the unknown but also the "intimately familiar", using a poetic language that was regarded at the time as new (10).[1] The poems published in *Chickweed Wintergreen* are taken from eleven collections, published between 1929 and 1973; a number of posthumously published poems are also included.

The poems based on Martinson's experience of life on the oceans are packed with concrete details that enable the reader to visualise the scene without prior experience. "The Albatross" is a case in point. Here, Martinson describes the albatross as he waits for his mate: "You waited for days, then she came . . . . When the jubilation of breeding had faded/— you storm birds/dived away, sorrowfully screeching, ravenous/ back out into the mists of the world" (22).

Martinson also wrote poems about nature. These are set in a pre-industrial peasant landscape that is sparsely populated but replete with the sounds of nature, birdsong and the humming of insects. There is often an invisible, even threatening presence that is not embodied. The poem "Home Village" is an excellent example (31). Here, gardens are alive with earthworms and "columbine still grows" (31). Smoke rises from cottages; the village is filled with peace. Underneath the surface, however, lurks a "silent lie": "A lie one would willingly hang on to, a lie/ for which one would trample down all evil truths" (31).

The poems published after 1945 have a more speculative quality that reflects Martinson's interest in contemporary science and classical Chinese Taoist philosophy. Life is enigmatic, which is mirrored in reflections of something that remains invisible to the human eye. The poem from which the collection takes its name is an excellent example: "Never luxuriates. / Yet manages, sparingly/ and neatly in the moss. / The flowers are delicate/ but know nothing of the sweet pliancy/ you would foist on summer. / The determination of the fragile/ is no less than that of the oak" (78). The contrast between "luxuriates" and "manages" and between "fragility" and "determination" heightens the mystery. These processes are invisible and yet are observed by

the poet.

Chickweed Wintergreen contains an extract from the epic *Aniara*, considered to be Martinson's most original production. Consisting of 103 "songs", it tells the story of humans who cannot cope with or must hide from their fate. Humanity is homeless. Song 13, for example, contains the following verse: "If only we could turn, go back to base/ now that we have discovered what our ship/ in essence is: a tiny bubble locked/ in glass, in glass of God's own spirit locked" (98). The song goes on to explain that the bubble moves "interminably slowly" to a new position; Aniara is situated "in interminable space/ abyss within abyss where light-years plunge/ around the bubble" (99).

After *Aniara*, Martinson's poems describe loss, impoverished nature, shame, abandonment and degradation. In "The Last Load", for example, the old woman is isolated in the field that has been robbed of its wheat: "The last harvest had creaked home. / The fields lay stubby and chill. / An old woman straggled after, distressed/ by all that had no chance of staying" (146).

Chickweed Wintergreen is a commendable collection. The result of a project initiated by some of the foremost Martinson scholars in Sweden, it makes available to English-language readers a range of poems that have not previously been translated into English. While Martinson's prose has been translated into a number of languages, his poems have appeared only sporadically in English. *Chickweed Wintergreen* redresses this deficiency.

Note

1. All the quotations in this article are from Harry Martinson, *Chickweed Wintergreen*, Trans. Robin Fulton Tarset, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2010.

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A Review on *Outside the Calendar*

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Outside the Calendar is Kjell Espmark's latest collection of poetry, featuring poems in Swedish and English from the 1968 collection *Voices in Public* to the present. Poet, novelist, literary historian and Member of the Swedish Academy since 1981, Espmark has published novels and books of criticism as well as poetry. His earliest poetry (from the late 1950s) is a form of lyrical story-telling, often in "I" form (the "I" is observed from a distance). The poems with which *Outside the Calendar* begins are characterised by a social and political orientation in which context is the prime controller of language. The focus is on Sweden, domestic suffering and the building of the welfare state. "Made in Sweden" is a case in point, which opens with the following two stanzas: "Morning. Grey. Eternal winter./ Keep still, boy, and let me reach./ The milk will soon freeze in its glass./Sh! Not so loud! / The eyes of neighbours glare from the wallpaper./ A ten-storey conversation/ through walls and floors./ The toilets roar like mighty accordions/ in this peasant village balanced on end" (18).[1]

The poems from the 1980s (*The Secret Meal*, 1982) widen the perspective to incorporate Europe and the world as a whole. Darker in tone than the earlier poems, they are critical of civilisation, which stifles mankind. "A book to burn', for example, contains the following lines: "How I miss you, my friends, prepared/ to refute all that I wrote, suffering/ the same impatience, the same anger as myself./ Instead of you I get eternity:/ one of the false, affirmative signs./ Yes, I wanted it! But within my want/ I wanted to undo all conclusions"(61).

Outside the Calendar also contains poems from two volumes published in the 1990s: *Route Tournante* (1992) and *The Other Life* (1998). These are pictures of loss as well as making a new start in life. "The Other Life", for example, begins with the haunting lines "As if standing beside a burned out car/ and seeing one's body crumpled over the wheel" (94). The final stanza concludes with "The wind turns/ beyond what is still smouldering/ and the eyes learn that smoke can sting:/ the life I didn't choose/ has suddenly chosen me./ And I am unwritten./ Write me" (95).

The poems from *The Living Have No Graves* (2002) were written while Espmark was grieving for his deceased wife. They come from the mouth of a lost wife who, like the other dead people who emerge in the poems, refuses to be silenced. In the poem "Hold me tight so I do not flee", for example, the "I" of the poem recognises that words are the only thing that can bind the couple together: "Only your words,/ only

a language that knows me,/ knows every thought and fear,/ can seize my straying soul by the hand/ and drag me back into what exists" (109).

The final twenty poems in *Outside the Calendar* are selected from *Lend Me Your Voice* (2007). *Outside the Calendar* bears witness to Espmark's conviction that the poet and the commentator are united. Sweden, Europe, civilisation, death, memory and the power of language are the fitting subjects of a poet. What awaits us in the future, as demonstrated in the last poem, "Before Sinking on to the Bench", is as uncertain as the haze in which the poet is sitting on the bench overlooking the strait. It behoves us to pay attention to the signs around us; they are like the abandoned heron at the water's edge that stays only for a short moment — and will soon be forever "outside the calendar".

Outside the Calendar is a fine tribute to Epsmark's long and distinguished career as a poet and critic. Published in April 2012, it provides invaluable insights into the nature of poetry and the relations of the poet with his environment.

Note

1. All the quotations in this article are form Kjell Espmark, *Outside the Calendar*, Trans. Robin Fulton Michigan: Marick Press, 2012.

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“垮掉的一代”:从 1960 年代的美国到 1990 年代的中国

樊　星

内容提要:美国“垮掉的一代”文学以疯狂去反抗绝望的姿态深刻影响了当代中国的“先锋派”文学,使许多中国青年作家摆脱了“现代迷信”的影响,走上了思想解放、个性自由的道路。另一方面,革命浪漫主义与“小资情调”以及中国古典文学的遗风也与“垮掉的一代”文学彼此激荡,催生了不同于“垮掉的一代”文学的作品。这部分作品显示了中国当代青年文学与传统文学资源的深刻联系。
关键词:“垮掉的一代”;文学传统;中国特色
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Title: Beat Generation: From America in the 1960s to China in the 1990s

Abstract: Beat Generation in America has influenced Chinese modernists deeply and help lots of Chinese young writers to escape from the “modern blind worship”. On the other hand, the revoluionary romanticist tradition, the “petty bourgeoisie style” and the classical literature have also melted with the Beat Generation in a strange way, which lead to a new trend quite different from the Beat Generation, and show the deep relation between the contemporary literature and the traditional literature.
Key words: Beat Generation; traditional literature; Chinese style
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“垮掉的一代”(Beat Generation),是二十世纪文化史上的一个关键词。它虽然特指的是美国 1950—1960 年代期间的一股青年文化思潮,却因为其影响的迅速扩大(最终成为一股国际性的文化思潮)、持久深刻(从 1960 年代一直持续到 1990 年代),而成为二十世纪后半叶最具影响力的青年文化思潮。[1]

就如同美国学者丹尼尔·霍夫曼指出的那样:“这群年轻人,不仅以自己那种夸张、无节奏的诗句,而且以自己的生活方式,在这一个……后来称为‘平静的五十年代’里,表达了自己同旧习惯势力的对抗。……他们崇拜个人完全自由,崇拜新生的吸毒者文化,崇拜东方宗教以及群居生活。他们是十年以后‘嬉皮’运动的先驱者和煽动者”。他们中间,有赫赫有名的诗人艾伦·金斯堡(Allen

Ginsberg,亦译作金斯伯格)、小说家杰克·克鲁亚克(Jack Kerouac,亦译作克茹亚克、凯鲁亚克)。这两个人,也是对当代中国的青年文化影响至深至大的人物。他们塑造了两代中国青年(当过“红卫兵”和知青的一代人和“新生代”)的精神面貌和生活方式。而这影响,又主要来自两篇文学作品——克鲁亚克的《在路上》(*On the Road*)和金斯堡的《嚎叫》(*Howl*)。

《在路上》是一部奇书。这部作品“应该被看做克鲁亚克多年前亲自命名为‘垮掉的一代’的那代人至今为止最具匠心的作品,它也是一份最明确的最重要的宣言。”[2] 作品中的那些青年男女是一些“疯狂的人,他们疯狂地生活,疯狂地谈话,疯狂地被拯救,同时对所有事物都心怀渴望,他们从来不打哈欠,从来不发表平庸的言论,只是燃烧、燃烧,像传说只的黄色罗马蜡烛一样燃烧不止。”“疯狂”,因此成为《在路上》中出现频率最高的一个词——从“纷繁疯狂的好戏即将开场”、“太疯狂了”、“我们这些恣意妄为的、疯狂的美国人”、“我们的头脑里装满了疯狂的想法”、“我在疯狂的美国夜晚冒险”到“纽约的绝对疯狂和荒诞的浮躁……疯狂的梦”、“整个疯狂的世界”、“整个宇宙都疯狂、荒谬、莫名其妙”的感觉……无论是偷车、搭车,还是无目的地突然上路、饿着肚子开着车到处流浪,“像是一只永不停息的箭”,“无数次往返横穿美国”,也不管是随便、即兴的男女性爱还是吸毒、困窘中靠乞讨搭车……这些青年人用疯狂去反抗绝望,去走“一条可以让任何人抵达任何地方的路”,追求“单纯的生存的狂喜”,这样的活法显然不同于西方现代主义中绝望、阴暗(以卡夫卡、乔依斯为代表)的思潮,而呈现出美国“西部精神”的豪放与乐观心态。这样的色调应该说更具有青春的气息、平民的风格、美国的精神。尽管那疯狂的活法(吸毒、性放纵)也戕害了他们的身心(克鲁亚克本人就死于酗酒,在47岁的盛年)。尽管疯狂的活法也常常会引起一系列的麻烦(那些突然的争吵、被警察管制的无奈、以及生活一旦平静下来以后就挥之不去的腻烦)。

而《嚎叫》也是“五十年代销售量最大,阅读者最多,最被广泛讨论的诗集。它对艾森豪威尔时期的所有虔诚之物进行抨击的激烈程度,对摧毁现存的文艺标准所抱的猛烈情绪,及其语言对当时来说的汹涌潮头,招致了人们对该作品及作者的群起围攻”。然而,《嚎叫》的焦灼情绪、粗鄙风格却使它成为了青年叛逆文化的旗帜。“金斯堡的诗在基调上大起大落,从狂喜到绝望;一会儿直冲云霄,一会儿深不可测;这一行里是自信,下一行里又有执顽。”而且,他的诗也显示了自然流淌的力量。[3]

在“文 革”中 滥 觞

史料表明,早在1962年,作家出版社就以“内部读物”的名义出版了石荣等翻译的克鲁亚克的名篇《在路上》。这本书后来成为“文革”中“地下读书”活动中影响最大的书籍之一。[3] 北岛也曾经回忆:“我们青年时代为《在路上》着魔,甚至有人能大段大段地背诵。” 在“着魔”、“大段大段地背诵”这些词组中。我们

可以想象那一代人的精神旅程——从狂热迅速跌入迷惘,忽然发现了“垮掉的一代”的文学经典,因此而如痴如醉,并因此而踏着克鲁亚克(还有中国作家艾芜)的足迹(艾芜的《南行记》曾经鼓舞起了许多知青的浪漫激情),开始了他们的流浪之旅(从“文革”前期打着“革命大串联”的旗号到处流浪、游山玩水到“文革”后期知青之间的“串点”活动,再到1980年代国门大开以后的“出国热”、“洋插队”)。

于是,我们可以看到,北岛的作品中,早就反复出现过“在路上”的主题——从“地下文学”作品《波动》中愤世嫉俗的女主人公肖凌“喜欢一个人散步,无拘无束地走在大街上,看暮色怎样淹没大地”,虽然“不知道哪是归宿”也依然前行,只希望“离开这个世界很远”的流浪心态,到诗歌《走向冬天》中那些伤感而决绝的诗句:“走向冬天/……我们绝不回去”,还有诗歌《走吧》中充满希望的句子:“走吧,/我们没有失去记忆,/我们去寻找生命的湖。”还有长诗《白日梦》中冷峻的句子:“你没有如期归来/而这正是离别的意义”;“多少年/多少火中的逃亡者/使日月无光”;“你们并非幸存者/你们永无归宿”(在这首诗中,“你没有如期归来”一句反复出现)……流浪的主题,“绝不回去”的主题,都是在经历了幻灭与觉醒以后去“重新寻找生存的峰顶”的心态证明。在回忆往事时,北岛曾经谈到他的“先锋派”朋友芒克、彭刚“突然决定要到全国旅游,就是突然翻过北京站的墙以后就上了火车,身上只带了两块多钱,到了武汉以后才发现没钱,就开始卖衣服卖裤子”的流浪经历;彭刚在回忆时也是“先从流浪讲起”的:“看了许多书,许多画册,满脑子都是浪漫的想法,有点唐·吉诃德的味儿。”“我是从徐浩渊那儿读到《在路上》、《麦田守望者》的……这些读物使我在十七八岁那个生理叛逆期里,追求个人自由,反对社会对个性的压制。还有我也不想上班,彻底的反物质。”因此,“我和芒克约好,从家里翻墙出来,当时手还挂着彩。我们一商量,流浪去。……随便翻墙进北京站赶火车就走了,身上只带了两块多钱。心中充满反叛的劲,对家庭,对社会。美国有本书叫《在路上》,我们也是走到路上再说。”到了武汉,没钱了,又不愿意进收容所,“只有沿着铁路线步行到下一个小站,再混上车。”后来,在绝望中,是凭着芒克的“美男计”,搭上一个女干部,这才绝处逢生。这第一次的出门流浪,对于他们的人生道路“有决定性的影响”。两人的创作欲望因此“被刺激起来了”,一个开始狂画;另一个开始狂写。直至狂热地“在北京街头宣布我们是先锋派,所做的一切是反社会的。”“我们的‘先锋派’就是崇拜西方,不单是崇拜西方的文学艺术,而且是崇拜西方的解放,个性解放。”[5] 诗人多多在谈到芒克时,也告诉我们:他是“大自然之子,打球、打架、流浪,他诗中的‘我’是从不穿衣服的、肉感的、野性的,他所要表达的不是结论而是迷失。……芒克的生命力是最令人欣慰的,从不读书但读报纸,靠心来歌唱。”[5] 此外,还有潘婧。她也曾经是芒克和多多的知青朋友。多年以后,她发表了回忆知青岁月的长篇小说《抒情年代》,其中也记录了她和她的同路人的流浪生涯。小说中,女主人公J十岁就有了弃家出走的经历,因为挨了父亲的打而

“在大街上漫无目的游荡”。多年后回忆那段往事,她发现:“我一生始终不渝的漂泊的愿望是否就是从那个车站的夜晚开始?”也就是说,在那次懵懵懂懂的出走中,已经有了命运的启迪:“在漂泊的路的尽头,应该有我自己的小房子。”而当她在插队的白洋淀有了一间属于自己的小房子的时候,她其实又并没能停止流浪的路程。乡村的贫困,使得知青们到处流浪——

> “那时侯,在知青中,有一些这样的人,他们背着一个军用书包,里面装着饭盒和一套换洗的内衣,从一个地方到另一个地方,常年过着流浪的生活,他们到那些知青聚集的村落,从山西到内蒙,从黑龙江的平原到西双版纳的橡胶林,他们在富庶的地区打工或参加知青点的劳动,挣到一点钱,再继续走。……即使互不相识,彼此也有款待的义务,这是知青之间不成文的规定。……流浪的生活艰辛而险象丛生,但是浪漫的诗情犹在……”

作家就这样写到了《在路上》——

> “‘不是艺术模仿生活,而是生活模仿艺术。’七十年代初处于‘地下状态’的畅销书是《在路上》。已经记不清我是从哪里弄到这本内部出版的‘灰皮书’,是从废品回收站低价买的,还是从我的一个父亲是党内著名作家的女同学那里借来的。这本书从我这儿被借来借去,辗转回到我手里时,封皮已是破烂不堪,沾满了油污与酒渍。那时侯比我们年轻一些的人模仿着克鲁亚克笔下的主人公,过着半真半假的流浪的生活,扒火车,偷窃,开放随意的性生活,一半是反叛,一半是生活的需要。……”

——在这样的生活中,他们的“日子过得就像吉普赛人”。他们常常回北京,整天整天在公园里流连,在公园的长椅上或茶棚里看书,聊天。中午以面包和苹果充饥。他们靠亲人的接济和借债度日。他们因此而能在那个贫困的年代里“狂放不羁,醉生梦死”。他们相信,“在那个时代,在那个年龄上,颓废是一种姿态”。而“流浪和寻找家园,我似乎永远在路上徘徊”也就成为《抒情年代》的一个基本主题。在那时,女主人公的男友 N(以一位著名诗人为原型)也像芒克一样开始了诗歌创作。他喜欢《草叶集》的磅礴大气,也向往雷马克笔下“男人和女人的生生死死的爱,痛苦中的坚毅,危难中的浪漫际遇”,整本地手抄泰戈尔、布洛克、洛尔加的诗集,也刻意模仿过《恶之花》的风格写作。“为了读书而读书,为了写诗而写诗”,使他们远离了那个时代的主流意识形态。

中国当代的“先锋派”,就是这样在“文革”的灰暗岁月中产生的,而他们的思想源头,正在《在路上》的影响中——躁动、叛逆、渴望流浪、追求自由。这里,特别应该强调的,是“先锋派”这个名词的意义,已经显然超越了文学的范畴。它不仅意味着叛逆的文学风格,更意味着放浪形骸的生活方式。是“垮掉的一

代”的人生观,使他们摆脱了“现代迷信”的影响,走上了思想解放、个性解放的道路——那也正是“五四”先驱们走过的道路:浪漫主义的道路。

但还有一种流浪,是与上述“先锋派”的流浪不太一样的、介于“先锋”与“革命”之间的一种流浪,就像老鬼在他的非虚构小说《血与铁》中记录的那样:“1967 年 4 月,大串联已经正式停止。可大串联养成的习惯犹在,蹭车极普遍。”为了支援越南抗美的战争,马清波和他的朋友们组成了“毛泽东抗美铁血团”,“一路上,我们披星戴月,冒着酷暑扒货车,挨晒、挨浇、挨劫……被大师傅从餐车窗户里给扔出来;过柳州的隧道,差点磕断老二;露宿南宁市邮局门口,丢了手表;趟越南的荒林,渴得喝那臭水……”这是当年接受共产主义理想教育和革命英雄主义教育的结果。在这方面,对主人公影响最大的,是《斯巴达克斯》那样的世界文学名著和《钢铁是怎样炼成的》、《红岩》那样的革命文学作品以及《王若飞在狱中》、《跟随毛主席长征》那样的革命传统教育读物。值得注意的是,主人公“一方面热衷于看英雄的书,贪婪地读有关反修的文章,满脑袋革命,一方面又偷别人的水果吃”,“因为饿,就骗家里的钱,就偷吃偷拿……”这又意味着主人公没有完全按照革命教育所要求的那样严格自律。主人公性格中的蛮劲、匪气,加上在追求理想过程中碰壁的经历和慢慢发现生活的荒诞,又使他的流浪呈现出十分驳杂的色彩。从越南被遣返回国以后,又想去西藏:“我总想找一个最荒凉,最野蛮的地方,隐姓埋名,苦练功夫,准备报国报民的本领。西藏与世隔绝,正是修身养性的好地方。说不定将来还能捞上仗打,印度一直占着我们大片地盘儿,很有希望。西藏还有许多人类从没有去过的高山深谷,生活会非常传奇惊险。”去了西藏,回来后又赶上上山下乡的浪潮,又出于独特的考虑,选择了内蒙:因为内蒙“地处反修的最前线,将来打仗了,这是第一战场,是祖国的北部屏障。内蒙牧区过着骑马游牧生活,不像农村种地那么单调,富有漂泊的浪漫。内蒙还有古代武士留下的遗风,盛行摔跤,诞生过好几个全国摔跤冠军,正对自己胃口。”他万万没有想到,内蒙八年的插队生活,给他带来的是巨大的磨难与深刻的屈辱……他的另一部“新新闻主义长篇小说”《血色黄昏》记录了那悲凉的经历。

都梁的长篇小说《血色浪漫》(这书名很容易使人想到《血色黄昏》)则记录了一帮干部子弟“玩主”在“文革”中躁动的生命力。他们“玩着玩着就捎带把革命干了”。这些“大院里的孩子们,突然像是中了邪,肾上腺素激增,一种青春激情和邪恶的混合物犹如一枚炸弹在这些少年们的体内爆炸,在一片红色的背景下,骤然产生一股凶猛的红色冲击波,以猛烈的力量向四周扩散,令人惊异的是,这股红色冲击波竟影响了他们的一生……”他们打架斗殴(“玩主们都把打架斗殴当做一件时髦的活动”)、抢军帽和毛主席像章(“他们不大在乎抢了什么,他们喜欢这种抢劫的过程”)。下乡以后,他们“竟然把讨饭当成了狂欢的节日,还煞有介事地准备街头卖艺”;而偷鸡摸狗、寻衅滋事,更是他们苦中作乐的拿手好戏。参军以后,依然调皮捣蛋、玩世不恭;但在战争中也能出生入死,英勇无畏

……。这个“不安分的男人……最不喜欢过平庸的日子”。“他需要一种时时能感受到新鲜感的生活方式,这种方式能给他带来挑战,带来激情,不然生活就变成了一潭死水,纵然生活得很富足,却没有任何意义。”作品中有三处写到知青受《在路上》影响的情感经历。女知青秦岭在谈到自己对社会的认识时说:“在世界上好人和坏人都不太多,大部分人属于中间状态。就像《在路上》里的狄恩,《麦田里的守望者》中的霍尔顿,他们不过是厌恶平庸的生活,喜欢选择一种适合于自己的生活方式,这本身没有什么错。”这样的思考表明:她已经跳出了阶级斗争理论的思想牢笼,开始理解“另类”的人生。她因此喜欢《在路上》这样的书。主人公钟跃民在婉拒女军医周晓白的爱情时是这么说的:“和我一样,自愿选择过一种‘在路上’的生活。你行吗?”多年以后,钟跃民还对秦岭说:“我喜欢‘在路上’的感觉,生命是一种过程,我们完全可以把这种过程设计得很有趣,这种过程之所以有趣是因为它是由一连串最初的体验所组成,初体验属于生命中最纯粹最美好的那一部分,它意味着梦想、勇气、新奇、刺激和执著……但很多时候,初体验往往还伴随着恐惧、担忧、绝望和危险,初体验是残酷的。……当年我们都很喜欢凯鲁亚克说过的那句话:我还年轻,我渴望上路,带着最初的激情,追寻着最初的梦想,感受着最初的体验,我们上路吧。”钟跃民在精神气质上与《血与铁》中的马清波颇为相似,但显然多了些“找乐”的色彩,而不似马清波那么悲情十足。

“文革”是人们的思想被专制主义禁锢得空前严密的时候,也是青年的流浪意识空前强烈的时候。这样的强烈反差是怎样形成的呢?从“文革”刚刚开始时的“红卫兵”“大串联”到“大串联”被迫停止下来以后“知青”上山下乡那样因为政治因素搅动的大流浪,到乡村的贫困生活迫使许多知青不得不逃离知青点,在“串点”中继续流浪,或者是不甘平庸,学习切・格瓦拉的英雄榜样,偷渡国境,走上越南、缅甸的游击战场……一直到好不容易熬到了“文革”结束,他们中相当一部分人又被西方的生活方式所吸引,掀起了“出国热”,并把在欧美飘泊的生活戏称为“洋插队”。而在改革的浪潮中,无数人不断“跳槽”的经历,千百万农民工进城打工的动荡生活,还有年轻的大学生们到处探险、到处找工作的漂泊……流浪,显然已经成为当代青年的重要生活方式。不论时代怎么变,都能唤起青年们“寻梦”的巨大热情,使他们义无返顾地走上了流浪的道路。是这样巨变的生活催生了躁动不安的情绪;而这躁动不安的情绪又十分偶然地与美国“垮掉的一代”浪漫而颓废的气息邂逅,由此产生了强烈的精神共鸣。

新时期的叛逆与颓废

到了 1980 年代,随着更年轻的一代人走上文化的舞台,随着“反传统”的情绪日益高涨,“垮掉的一代”的作品和情绪以更迅速、更浩大的规模继续在青年中流传。

例如在 1980 年代的现代主义诗歌运动中,反传统、反文化的情绪就十分强

烈。出生于1962年的“非非主义”诗人杨黎就谈到过他受金斯堡影响的经历：“我仅仅是因为一个非常偶然的机会，在一本破烂不堪的《中国青年》杂志上，看见一篇批判性介绍美国‘垮掉一代’的小文章。在那一篇文章里，除了让我知道美国有一群吸毒和搞同性恋的人之外，最让一个诗歌少年震撼的，是文章中引用的一句金斯伯格的诗：我看见我三条腿在走路。在这句诗的后面，那篇小文章的作者说，这是诗人吸了大麻后的幻觉。……那是一本六十年代（或者五十年代）的《中国青年》，，我是在读高中（1978年）时看见的。时过两年，我模仿着这句话，写出了《我从灰色的大街上走过》。”后来，在谈及“第三代人”（“新生代”诗人的另一种说法）的特色时，他的概括是：“第三代人的时髦语言，是逃离。逃离和流浪不同，后者是离家出走的意思，而前者，是指一种梦想对本质的超越。逃离，逃离。逃离！这就是一切。所有的闪光，所有的欢乐，所有的自由，所有的母亲，所有的树木、诗篇、乳房、火车头、音乐、酒乃至价值，都在这逃离之中。”为此，他甚至从毛泽东思想中发现了可用的武器：“革命不是请客吃饭。第三代人的诗歌运动，已经粗暴极了。横扫一切牛鬼蛇神的战斗精神，贯穿到了每一个标点符号里面。”“毛泽东以先哲的目光，意味深长地指出——教育要革命！这一指示的魄力，恰好是为一个将至的新世纪和它的新文化奠定了基础。”“文化革命……直接为第三代人诗歌运动打下了良好的基础。”[6] 这样，杨黎就从毛泽东那里找到了“反传统”的思想武器。这也正好从一个侧面映证了美国评论家弗雷德里克·詹姆逊关于“毛主义乃是60年代一切伟大新兴意识形态中最丰富的思想”的论断。而杨黎那部记录了“第三代人的写作和生活”的书《灿烂》就以相当惊世骇俗的笔触展示了作者和他的诗友们酗酒、嫖娼、写诗的混乱生活。读《灿烂》，很容易使人想起《嚎叫》开篇的句子：“我看见这一代最杰出的头脑毁于疯狂，挨着饿歇斯底里浑身赤裸……/……他们贫穷衣衫破旧双眼深陷昏昏然在冷水公寓那超越自然的黑暗中吸着烟漂浮过城市上空冥思爵士乐章彻夜不眠，/……他们被逐出学院因为疯狂因为在骷髅般的窗玻璃上发表猥亵的颂诗/……他们……夜复一夜地作践自己的身体，/用梦幻，用毒品，用清醒的恶梦，用酒精和阳具和数不清的睾丸……”

“他们文学社”的代表人物于坚在表述他的诗歌观念时指出：“我们的诗歌……和传统文化的本质区别，它是无礼的、粗俗的、没有风度的，它敢于把自己（个人）生活最隐秘的一面亮给人看，它以最传统的方式（大巧若拙）表达了最现代的精神，就精神而言，它与西方精神，如惠特曼、桑德堡、金斯伯格、《恶之花》是相通的。”[7] 他主张“世间一切皆诗”，他的许多具有浓厚生活气息的诗作（如《尚义街六号》）显示了他对于粗俗人生的特别关注。虽然相比《嚎叫》的疯狂，于坚显得比较有节制。例如《尚义街六号》中的句子：“没有妓女的城市/童男子们老练地谈着女人/偶尔有裙子们进来/大家就扣好纽子”，就写活了1980年代的大学生在性意识上的懵懂与生涩。而在“那是智慧的年代/许多谈话如果录音/可以出一本名著”，“我们常常提到尚义街六号/说是很多年后的一天/孩子

们要来参观”这样的句子中,也相当真切地写出了那个年代大学生的成功梦想(这梦想在金斯堡的笔下是没有的)。在长诗《飞行》中,也有几行描写诗人在飞行中的奇思异想:“我已经上路 我会掏出来吗/ 在旧金山的澡堂里 金斯堡乱伦的器官奄奄一息/ 他的词典被遗忘在东方的箱子中 他落后于美国而成为诗歌先锋”。在这样的思绪中,体现出诗人对金斯堡的先锋意识的独到理解,以及对金斯堡发现东方文化的欣赏,还有对金斯堡的先锋意识已经被“新潮”所遗忘的忧思。在《诗言体》一文中,也有这么一句:“金斯堡是有身体的大诗人”,[7] 表明了于坚对于金斯堡的认同。

尽管“莽汉主义”的代表人物,出生于1963年的李亚伟否认“莽汉主义”与美国“垮掉的一代”之间存在着影响与传承的关系,自道是在“莽汉主义”成立了一年以后的1985年才读到《嚎叫》,并感慨:“他妈的,原来美国还有一个老莽汉”,但他的这感慨本身已经表明了“莽汉”与“垮掉的一代”在精神气质上的相通。在由李亚伟执笔的《莽汉主义宣言》中,有这样的嚎叫:“捣乱、破坏以至炸毁封闭式和假开放的文化心理结构!”“一首真正的莽汉诗一定要给人的情感造成强烈的冲击。”[8] 这与《嚎叫》中的句子何其相似!——“梦想!崇拜!光亮!宗教!一整船的谎话!/决口!泛过河岸!翻腾和十字架上的苦刑!倾入洪水!高地!显现!绝望!十年的动物惨叫和自杀!头脑!新欢!疯狂的一代!撞上时光的岩石!……”他的代表作《硬汉们》也以粗鄙的风格显示了向传统挑战的姿态:“我们仍在痛打白天/袭击黑夜//我们这些不安的瓶装烧酒/这群狂奔的高脚杯/我们本来就是/腰间挂着诗篇的豪猪”;“我们下流地贫穷/我们胡乱而又美丽/……我们这群现代都市中的剑齿虎/这些眼镜蛇啊……”这些疯狂的诗句正好写出了“莽汉”们反文化、渴望释放兽性的疯狂情绪。

在“新传统主义”代表诗人,出生于1958年的廖亦武的长诗《死城》中,我们也可以明显感受到“新传统主义”诗人“与探险者、偏执狂、醉酒汉、臆想病人、现代寓言制造家共命运”的怪异风格 :“我是一座空城沉陷于另一座空城。……我是夜夜爆发惨笑的房间。……我的发根溢荡着尸臭。”“上帝死了。谁来摆弄悬空的棋子?回音狰厉。……我的皮肉像破旧的衣服自动剥离骨头。我的脑髓发痒。蚂蚁进进出出。……人世幽暗。尼采周游银河归来。祭品廖亦武正要在万众前自焚。”“几位大夫在追捕女娲。夸父、刑天、屈原、庄周等疯祖宗的器官全被宰掉了。我好歹逃出杀人如麻的杏花村,随你挤进喧嚣的广场。向全体疯子表演:把第三代自恋狂人变成腰间挂着诗篇的猪”。这样的诗篇,已经无异于醉酒汉的呓语、臆想病人的狂叫。这样的呓语与狂叫与《嚎叫》中的句子也十分相近:“他们失去了自己的爱侣全因那三只古老的命运地鼠,一只是独眼的异性恋美元一只挤出子宫直眨眼另一只径自端坐剪断织布工匠智慧的金线”,“他们整夜信笔涂鸦念着高深的咒语摇滚为卑怯的早晨留下一纸乱语胡言”,“他们愤怒的抗议仅仅掀翻了一张象征性的乒乓桌,暂且罢手因为精神紧张,/多年以后卷土重来光秃秃的只剩下一头血样的假发,泪水和手指,回到这东边的疯城,这病

房中疯人们无法逃脱的恶运……” 在廖亦武的“死城”与金斯伯格的“疯城”之间,在《死城》的呓语与狂叫与《嚎叫》的乱语胡言之间,我们可以感受到明显的气息相通。

而《嚎叫》中那些对于“阳具和数不清的睾丸”的描写,对于“狂野的鸡奸”、“抖动的性器”、“奸宿娼妓”、“撩起憔悴的女侍生的衬裙”的描写,以及“舌头,阳具,手和屁股神圣!”的嚎叫,也直接触动了中国“新生代”诗人大胆写性体验的兴奋点,从 1980 年代“我们把屁股撅向世界”(默默:《共醉共醒》)到“在女人的乳房上烙下烧焦的指纹/在女人的洞穴里浇铸钟乳石”(唐亚平:《黑色洞穴》)到“整个夜晚/自渎着/我赤身裸体”(贝岭:《整个夜晚》)[9] 这些袒露性器和性隐秘的诗句到2000 年“下半身”诗歌产生了这样的嚎叫:“我们要让诗意死得很难看”、“我们亮出了自己的下半身,男的亮出了自己的把柄,女的亮出了自己的漏洞”(沈浩波)“女人越坚贞呵,我越要勾引你们的男人”(尹丽川:《情人》)……这样无耻的袒露与嚎叫是反传统的极致,也是兽性的证明。这里,特别值得指出的,是《嚎叫》中的性开放情绪是与“我看见这一代最杰出的头脑毁于疯狂”的愤怒和“他们在联合广场分发超共产主义的小册子”、“他们跪倒在无望的教堂为彼此的解脱为光明和乳房而祈祷,只求灵魂得到暂时的启迪”这样的梦想联系在一起的,可在《黑色洞穴》、《整个夜晚》以及“下半身”诗歌中,则只剩下性的苦闷与性的狂欢了。

棉棉的中篇小说《啦啦啦》也是以金斯堡的作品《歌》的诗句作题记的:“皮肤/在幸福地颤抖/灵魂/喜悦地来到了眼睛”。小说中还有一处提到金斯堡:“艾伦也是个爱想入非非的人,他也曾醉心毒品,他是我和赛宁都喜爱的诗人。”小说中还有这样的句子:“我那对于美国六十年代文化的古怪激情,赛宁是最欣赏和最支持的一个。”这些都表明了金斯堡和美国六十年代青年文化对棉棉和她笔下人物的影响。他们的生活醉生梦死、惹是生非、歇斯底里、十分混乱,他们沉醉于音乐、酗酒、吸毒、乱爱,喜欢施虐和受虐,“把偏激和疯狂作为自己的唯一特征”,同时也感到“我们这样的寄生虫生活很不好”,知道自己的健康已经因为疯狂的生活而严重受损,而且困惑:“我不明白为什么我们的生活注定会失去控制”。于是有了这样的问题:“我们到底是为了自由而失控的,还是我们的自由本身就是一种失控?”这是一个“问题少女”对自由的质疑。《啦啦啦》的风格“是即兴的”,作者说:“我不打算再去修改”。这样的文风也与《在路上》的一气呵成十分相似。因为《在路上》就是“自发的散文”,是“速写式”的产物。[10]而这样的“自发”写作的文学价值显然是值得怀疑的。对此,美国评论家莫里斯·迪克斯坦就曾经指出:“《在路上》不知怎么的,虽然是一部好书,却不是一部好小说。书中……缺乏戏剧性的发展或者结果;书中有太多的次要人物……甚至文体也常常流于陈词滥调”。同样的遗憾,也常常在当代中国不少年轻作家的作品中随处可见。

而出生于 1971 年的青年作家丁天也说过:“我最喜欢的一本书是《在路

上》,前前后后买过三本,都被翻得不成样子了,现在,出门旅行时我还是习惯带上这本书看。”“其他很多的爱好以及生活方式都或多或少地受了这本书的影响,比如,喜欢听流行音乐,喜欢读佛经,喜欢和朋友结伴旅行,甚至尝试性地去吸迷幻药……”[11]他的“半自传性”长篇小说《玩偶青春》就充满了“青春期的压抑和狂躁”——“想永远自由自在、无拘无束地活着”,可又“对周围很讨厌,也很愤世,对周围同学也没什么好感,整天昏昏欲睡的样子,沉默寡言,不苟言笑,独来独往,对生活充满悲观。”在家里与父亲格格不入,到了学校发现了老师的虚伪,朦胧的恋情也与莫名其妙的烦恼(如女友的唠叨,以及第一次吻女友以后就想离开她的变态心理)纠缠在一起……因此而叹息:“什么也不属于我。十八岁和八岁其实没有任何区别。”于是只好承认“我无法改变自己的生活”,只好“凑合活着吧”。这样,《玩偶青春》就成为“新新人类”厌学、厌世情绪的集中体现。《玩偶青春》中,“我一直是一个胆小的孩子”、“一开始我就十分自卑。那种自卑感像个影子似的跟着我,暂时忘记抛开后,它会更固执地对我跟踪追击、如影随形”、“我深深地感到面对自己我无能为力,面对身外的世界,我更无能为力”、“十七岁的我厌倦了一切,一切厌倦了我”、“反正我是一个没有任何追求的人”……这些此起彼伏的叹息显示了“新新人类”的人格孱弱与萎缩。他们空有反抗的想法,却缺乏反抗的勇气和力量。

由此可见,同样是“垮掉”的心态,同样是反传统、反文化的主张,同样是粗鄙化的风格,其间的差异也一目了然。

传统的力量:对粗鄙的消解

当代文学的粗鄙之风已经引起了诗歌爱好者普遍的忧虑。当“反传统”、“反文化”的嚎叫明显戕害了文学的精神时,怎样抵消“反传统”、“反文化”的病态影响就成为值得研究的话题。

我们不难注意到,当过“知青”的那些作家们一面接受了《在路上》的影响,一面自然地将他们同时接受的俄苏文学的积极影响与《在路上》的影响融为了一体。在《波动》、《抒情年代》中,弥漫着浓郁的“小资情调”——怀旧的感伤、愤世的悲凉,而在《血与铁》和《血色浪漫》,也跃动着英雄主义的豪情(虽然那豪情又是与匪气混合在一起的)。而这“小资情调”和英雄主义的豪情又显然是植根于人类精神文化的传统之中的。于是,这些“知青文学”能够得到从评论界到大众的一致共鸣。

另一方面,于坚既接受了“惠特曼、桑德堡(Carl Sandburg)、金斯伯格、《恶之花》(*The Flowers of Evil*)”的影响,又不遗余力地从中国古典文学中发掘不朽的精神遗产——从“《诗经》中的作品我们今日依然可以感动”、“宋词,我一直是作为现代派的东西来阅读”的心得[11]到“我会怀念《金瓶梅》或《红楼梦》的时代,那是有家的时代啊”的感叹[12],从“‘诗意的栖居’正是古老中国的存在方式”的感悟 到“汉语是世界上最优美、最富于诗性的语言之一”的赞美[13],都可以看出诗

人在传统遗产与现代意识、在中国古典文学与西方现代文学之间自由穿行的健康心态。于坚是当代最有影响的诗人之一,也是最善于从中国古典诗词中寻找创造的灵感的成功探索者。他坚持“日常关怀”,但并不流于粗鄙,而是成功发掘了日常生活的诗意。可以说,他是以中国古典的诗歌精神抵消了“垮掉的一代”的负面影响。

事实上,就连金斯堡,也并不是完全抛弃了传统的。就像美国学者莫里斯·迪克斯坦指出的那样:“在金斯堡身上,我们能够辨认出六十年代‘新’文化的某些传统根源。他自己就煞费苦心地设法扩大我们对诗歌传统的认识,并强调他与布莱克(Blake)、惠特曼(Walt Whitman)、兰波(Arther Rimband)、威廉·卡洛斯·威廉斯(William Caros Willianms)和其他一些在四十年代和五十年代遭到学院冷遇的诗人们的相似之处。”他甚至还被看作“三十年代的一种斗志昂扬的左翼文化的残存者”,[12]因为他在《美国》一诗中写下了这样的句子:“美国,我在孩提时代曾信奉共产主义,但我不觉遗憾”,“你该瞧见我阅读马克思的著作了”。而克鲁亚克也深受过陀思妥耶夫斯基(Dostoyevsky)和沃尔夫(Thomas Wolfe)的影响,他“在陀思妥耶夫斯基的作品中体验到一种无限的自由自在的感觉”。他还研究过佛教。他的《在路上》也被认为是美国文学中描写“路上生活”的文学传统(代表作有《白鲸》[*Moby-Dick*]和《哈克贝利·芬恩历险记》[*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*])的延续。[13]此外,克鲁亚克曾经长期潜心于佛学和道家思想的研究,《在路上》中也有一处特别点明了主人公“自顾自,独行其是”的活法“符合道家学说”,更显示了“垮掉的一代”作家对东方古老智慧的认同与继承。由此可见,这些“反传统”的文学家其实并没有反叛一切传统。

注解【Notes】

1.[美‖]丹尼尔·霍夫曼主编:《美国当代文学》(下),王逢振等译(北京:中国文联出版公司,1984年):751。

2.[美]丹尼尔·霍夫曼主编:《美国当代文学》(下),王逢振等译(北京:中国文联出版公司,1984年):753。

3.北岛:《艾伦·金斯堡》,《失败之书》(汕头:汕头大学出版社,2004年):4。

4.《北岛访谈录》,廖亦武主编:《沉沦的圣殿》(乌鲁木齐:新疆青少年出版社,1999年):329。

5.《灿烂》,(西宁:青海人民出版社,2004年):60。

6.《60年代断代》,王逢振主编:《六十年代》(天津:天津社会科学院出版社,2000年):19。

7《英雄与泼皮》,《诗探索》2(1996)。

8.引自徐敬亚、孟浪、曹长青、吕贵品编:《中国现代主义诗群大观(1986—1988)》(上海:同济大学出版社,1988年):145。

9.因自马策:《诗歌之死》,《芙蓉》2(2001)。

10.[美]萨克文·伯科维奇主编:《剑桥美国文学史》(第七卷,散文作品,1940—1990年),(北京:中央编译出版社,2005年):191。

11.《棕皮手记·1997-1998》,《于坚集》(卷5)《拒绝隐喻》(昆明:云南人民出版社,2004年):47。
12.引自巴里·吉福德、劳伦斯·李:《跨掉的行路者——回忆杰克·克茹亚克》,华明等译(南京:译林出版社,2000年):81、221。
13.李斯编著:《垮掉的一代》(海口:海南出版社,1996年):79-82。

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