

Ny skriftserie

Turistlyrik

Jørn Erslev Andersen: J.P. Jacobsen and  
The Concept of Man

J.P. Jacobsen: Middag

Jørn Erslev Andersen: The Fashionable J.P. Jacobsen

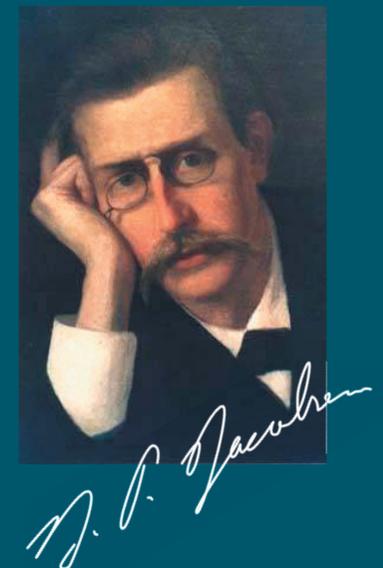
J.P. Jacobsen Selskabet

# JACOBSENIANA

SKRIFTER FRA J.P. JACOBSEN SELSKABET

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# **JACOBSENIANA**

Skrifter fra J.P. Jacobsen Selskabet

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## NY SKRIFTSERIE

Det er med stor glæde J.P. Jacobsen Selskabet i samarbejde med Afdeling for Litteraturhistorie, Institut for Æstetiske Fag, Aarhus Universitet, hermed præsenterer ”Jacobseniana. Skrifter fra J.P. Jacobsen Selskabet”.

Jacobsens forfatterskab er nok ikke folkeligt i ordets traditionelle forstand. Men som person var han af folket, med rødder i sej, nordvestjysk muld. Han afsøgte nysgerrigt og utrætteligt naturen og menneskets dybder og formidlede sin indsigt i en form, der fortsat appellerer til det moderne menneske.

Derfor ser J.P. Jacobsen Selskabet det som en vigtig opgave at medvirke til at formidle litteratur af og om J.P. Jacobsen. Vi vil gerne medvirke aktivt til at ilte Jacobsen-læsningen og dermed diskussionen og forståelsen af et forfatterskab, der nok er smalt og kan synes svært, men som har en dybde, der rammer noget almenmenneskeligt af interesse for os alle. Vi vil gerne medvirke til at skabe rum, hvor den interesserede læser og forskeren kan mødes, hvor der er plads til både den enkeltes livtag med forfatterskabet og forskerens videnskabelige tilgang – og alt derimellem.

J.P. Jacobsen Selskabet vil gerne tænke både lokalt, nationalt og globalt. Vi har en forpligtelse til lokalt at værne om minder og memorabilia. Vi føler en forpligtelse til at bidrage til det globale,

ikke fordi 'globalisering' er i tidens ånd, men fordi Jacobsen meget hurtigt vandt indpas både nationalt og internationalt.

At samle og danne et overblik over, hvad der er skrevet og fortsat skrives om Jacobsen, synes næsten uoverskueligt. Vi lover ikke at denne skriftserie kan give overblikket. Formålet med serien er at udgive tekster som kan have interesse for Jacobsen-entusiaster og alle andre, der måtte være interesserede i forfatter-skabet. Vi vil bringe foredrag, artikler, mindre afhandlinger, opgaver og anden gennemarbejdet og relevant litteratur. Serien ud-sendes gratis til Selskabets medlemmer og vil være tilgængelig på alle biblioteker og i elektronisk form på J.P. Jacobsen Selskabets hjemmeside.

Vi ser frem til en række spændende bidrag til skiftserien, idet vi erindrer, hvad J.P. Jacobsens bror, William A. Jacobsen, skrev til Vilhelm Møller d. 2.5. 1885, to dage efter J.P.s død:

Jeg vil nok komme til at gøre Dem en Del ulejlighed med min Broders Efterladenskab. Det kunde jo være han havde noget, der var værdt at trykke.

Jovist, Jacobsen har absolut efterladt noget, der er værd at trykke, læse og skrive om.

På bestyrelsens vegne  
Else Bisgaard

## TURISTLYRIK

Mangen berømt forfatters navn er udødeliggjort i gade- og vejnavne. Også Jacobsen er i hjembyen Thisted betænkt med både ”J.P. Jacobsens Plads” og ”J.P. Jacobsens Gade”. Nu synes han til overflod at blive husket, da et kommende nyt indkøbscenter i Thistedes midte minsandten skal hedde intet mindre end ”J.P. Jacobsen-centret”. Centrets placering, tæt op ad Jacobsens beskedne fødehjem, har givet anledning til en heftig lokal debat. I det oprindelige forslag forlød det, at for at huske den store digter skulle der på centrets mure indgraveres digte af Jacobsen. Man ser det for sig: på konsum- og forbrugstemplets mur, nær cykelstativerne, kan vi med de fyldte bæreposer meditere over ”I Seraillets Have”.

Vi ved, at Jacobsen havde et humoristisk blik for, hvad der skete sådan lokalt. Se bare, hvad han skrev i et brev til Edvard Brandes d. 28.10.1879:

...skulde du ønske Oplysninger om den interessante Sag med hvor den nye Jernbanestation i Thisted skal ligge eller om det nye Snekastningsregulativ, skal jeg være udtømmelig.

Velorienteret og dog med en vis slagfærdig humor, tør man sige.

J.P. Jacobsen Selskabet er blevet fristet til at låne en vending fra et af Jacobsens digte i anledning af turistlyrikkens indtog i det moderne Thisted:

Der ligger en Duft af Boutiquelyrik  
alt ud over Thisted Midte...

Se digtet ”Middag” optrykt i midten af hæftet her: Faksimiler af håndskrevet udkast, Håndskiftsamlingen, Det kongelige Bibliotek (signatur: Marx-Nielsen 27, 4° VI, læg 8, side 21-22) og den trykte version fra J.P. Jacobsen, *Digte og Udkast* ved Edvard Brandes og Vilhelm Møller, København 1886.

Bestyrelsen

**Jørn Erslev Andersen**

## **J.P. JACOBSEN AND THE NATURE OF MAN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Danish author Jens Peter Jacobsen was born April 7, 1847 in Thisted where he also died on April 30, 1885. Thisted is a small town between the main inlet and the West coast of the northern part of the peninsula Jutland, Denmark.

During his short lifetime he published six poems, some fragments, two novels and a collection of short stories. From 1870 thru 1873, when he fell ill by tuberculosis, he published several essays on topics concerning Darwin, botany and natural science in general. He translated Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* into Danish; these translations came out 1872 and 1874-75.

All of this connected with the fact, that he was considered a provocative author with regard to themes and style, made him indeed a famous and considerably debated writer and character especially from the 1880es to the 1920es.

During the last 25 years, the understanding and reception of J.P. Jacobsen's writings have undertaken some radical changes at least in Danish literary history and criticism. Due to these changes some of the more tenacious dogmatisms of Danish literary history

are brought up for debate, and particularly the following four statements: 1) that J.P. Jacobsen is an outstanding example of the Danish or Scandinavian ‘Naturalism’, 2) that Jacobsen is a key figure of the so-called “Modern Breakthrough” in Danish and Scandinavian literary history beginning in the 1870es, and thus a combatant of Georg Brandes’ group of radical artists and intellectuals, 3) that Jacobsen was primarily an athiestic and Darwinistic writer even when writing fiction, and 4) that Jacobsen was thus to a certain extent an unsuccessful naturalistic author with an outstanding and somewhat exaggerated sense for stylistic patterns and for subjects of decadence or even perversion.

As an editor and scholar of J.P. Jacobsen’s oeuvre and its significance for contemporary criticism and literary theory, I cannot agree with any of these four statements. In my opinion they are but ideological constructions made especially by Vilhelm Andersen and Paul V. Rubow during the first decades of the 20th century.

In my portrait of Jacobsen on the website [www.adl.dk](http://www.adl.dk) I argue briefly for all of this. I shall extend these arguments in a book on Jacobsen which I am presently working on. In light of the problems associated with the aforementioned perspectives, I offer the following remarks on Jacobsen’s concept of “the nature of man” – “Menneskenaturen” – in an attempt to revise this part of Danish literary history.

## **J.P. JACOBSEN'S POETICAL MANIFESTO**

In a March 1880 letter to Edvard Brandes J.P. Jacobsen anticipates the critical reception of his second novel *Niels Lyhne*. The novel was published 9 months later. His first novel *Fru Marie Grubbe* came out in 1876 and instantly raised a debate, especially focusing on the indelicate portrait of the main figure, Marie Grubbe. Whereas the style of the novel was very much acclaimed, it raised some harsh criticism relative to the composition and the missing coherence and logical causality in the treatment of the protagonist's descent from an attractive and seductive young noblewoman to a poor outcast and ferry woman. The novel was considered a bit of a failure due to the surprising and nearly arrogant way of disobeying the laws of the naturalistic novel concerning heredity and environment. Still, though, the novel *Fru Marie Grubbe* was praised as being very promising, it attracted a lot of attention and was immediately sold out. The contemporary critics expected J.P. Jacobsen's next novel to be a more coherent and straight forward naturalistic presentation of crucial subjects brought up for discussion and embedded in an eminent style. The critics, including the critics among the Brandes group and Georg Brandes himself, were utterly disappointed. The novel *Niels Lyhne* (1880) was much more disobedient relative to the genre than the former novel ever was. The vague historical background, the

vague protagonist, the unclear topic brought up for discussion (atheism), the arabesque style and the very loose, and indeed even lacking interconnections of the chapters raised a criticism that was often rather harsh (it is, by the way, exactly these same patterns that from the 1890es on made Jacobsen's novel the most influential and celebrated novel especially amongst early German Modernists such as Rainer Maria, Rilke, Stefan George, Herman Hesse, Thomas Mann and many other prominent authors also from Scandinavia, Italy, France and the UK). Anticipating this criticism in the letter to Edvard Brandes, Jacobsen offers the following indeed very farsighted, exceptional and rather complex statements:

Lately it has become fashionable to claim that too much attention has been paid to the history of evolution. There is no reason to fling out a such accusation against works of fiction, for they only have finished conditions, even where there is an attempt to create a real evolution there only exists a fixed form verifying itself increasingly sheet by sheet, emphasizing itself more and more. There are potentials in them for a lot of things whereby they gain in firmness, but not in life. The real evolutionary history (*"voir venir les choses"*) should now be taken into consideration by those capable of doing so, even if the characters should then lack a bit in coherence. (Actually, there are some aspects of the human beings which are without coherence; and how, one may ask, should something as complex, educated and influenced by and built of so many entities as the spiritual aspect of a human being be an organic whole). Of course, there must be a coherence in the larger picture, but if the books are meant to be more than complete encyclopaedia of human knowledge, one must challenge the intelligence of the

readers and not, anxiously and carefully, draw a red anchoring rope through all the stages and phases of a character. (my translation)

Det er i Naturvidenskaben bleven Mode i den senere Tid at sige at der er bleven lagt for megen Vægt paa Udviklingshistorien. Den beskyldning kan ikke med Grund udslynges mod works of fiction; thi her er der næsten altid kun Tale om færdige Tilstande, selv hvor der er gjort Forsøg paa det er det aldrig virkelig Udvikling, der er kun en vis fast Form, der Ark for Ark nuanceres rigere og rigere, understreges mer og mer. Der er Muligheder i dem til alt muligt, derved vinder de naturligvis i Fasthed, men ikke i Liv. Den virkelige Udviklingshistorie ("*voir venir les choses*") er det der bør lægges Vægt paa nu af dem der kan, selv med Fare for at Karaktererne skal synes at mangle Sammenhæng. (I Virkeligheden er der enkelte Sider af Menneskene, der ikke hænger sammen; hvor skulde ogsaa en saa complex, saa mange Steder fra hentet, uddannet og paavirket Ting som den aandelige Side af et Menneske, være organisk hel). Naturligvis skal der være Sammenhæng i det hele Store, men hvis Bøgerne ikke skal blive hele Conversationslexica for Menneskekundskab maa man stille Fordringer til Publikums Intelligens og ikke ængstelig og omhyggelig trække et rødt Ankertoug igjennem alle en Figurs Stadier og Phaser. (Erslev Andersen 2003: 221-222)

The farsightedness of these astonishing statements surely is impressive. The remarks are not just faint self-protective rhetorical parades against the criticism of his poetics. On the contrary, they are confrontative and provocative outlines of what I consider a kind of more or less hidden manifesto for his rather Neo-Darwinist and modernist poetics. I consider the passage from the letter very clarifying when examining Jacobsen's modernist approach *avant la lettre* to what writing fiction means. A close read-

ing of this passage may be a reasonable starting point for an exposure of his contribution to modern European literature and literary theory in the complicated realms of natural science and literary creativity. I would like to draw attention to the following topics embedded in the long quotation by dividing it up and relate it to three topics: 1) Natural science versus works of fiction, 2) The mind (spiritual) aspect of a human being, and 3) The poetics of the lacking red anchoring rope.

These three topics will serve as headings or as guidance for the presentation of the core of this paper.

## **NATURAL SCIENCE VERSUS WORKS OF FICTION**

What Jacobsen had in mind when writing about natural science and theories of evolution is not at all clear, on the contrary, it is a topic of intense debate even today. In his very recommendable monography in German, *Jens Peter Jacobsen*, Bengt Algot Sørensen presents some interesting, but to my mind not all convincing, arguments that the German ‘spiritual’ Darwinist Ernst Haeckel had the most significant impact on Jacobsen’s way of thinking and writing. The Norwegian Jacobsen scholar Erik Østerud argues in a sequence of essays that Jacobsen’s concept of natural science, Darwinism and nature conclude in allegories of nature (Østerud 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1998). I am not sure whether such attempts to figure out the true nature of Jacobsen’s concept

of nature will bear any kind of fruit at all, be it an exact philological attempt, or be it in terms of an allegorical *tour de force* of theoretical interpretations.

At the very beginning of the reflection natural science is said to be overloaded, so to speak, by evolutionary history, whereas works of fiction hardly bear any sign of it. The *differentia specifica* of the link between nature, natural science and fiction is elucidated in the launch of what Jacobsen later calls “the real history of evolution”. The explanation of this real history is rather elliptical, he only explains it by offering it as an imperative, a rather odd linguistic gesture, embedded in parenthesis and put in inverted commas, to indicate that it is either a quotation or a spoken sentence, and in a foreign language: “voir venir les choses”, that is, “size things up”, or, in contemporary American, “check things out” (in Danish: “se tingene komme/se tingene an”). The imperative “size things up” should in this context mean something like: “confront yourself with reality, take a look at things as they really are.” This has nothing to do, actually, with Darwinism, atheism or natural science. It is an endeavour to capture reality in its pure nakedness, to grasp, that is, the real evolutionary history *for those capable of doing so*. It is astonishing that those capable of doing so are the artists and not the scientists. The scientific strive for sober consideration in sizing things up is then linked to a neoteric attempt to create fictional characters embedded in a real evolu-

tionary history. As such, the characters cannot be organic wholes or coherent. For, if they are described as being completely coherent, or at least are aimed to be coherent, they would lack any kind of validity as figures of the real evolutionary history. Jacobsen's way of linking natural science and works of fiction together is at the same time a sharp division of reality from fiction, reality is opposing any kind of fictional firmness. There is no identity between the subject and its representation. The real as well as the fictional evolutionary history are in works of fiction linked together by diametrical opposites, the former representing the slow evolutionary changes of natural things, the latter the fast evolutionary changes of what Jacobsen calls not *the* human mind but *a* human mind. He only briefly unfolds all of this by creating a blended metaphor in order to pose a cognitive image of what has to be abolished in decent or even real works of fiction.

### **THE MIND (SPIRITUAL) ASPECT OF A HUMAN BEING**

Jacobsen poses a crucial question: "(...) how, one may ask, should something as complex, educated and influenced by so many entities as the spiritual aspect of a human being be an organic whole". This indeed anti-romantic question is not to be taken as an excuse for the inability to produce conventional novels, but rather as an acceptance of the complexity of the human mind. To size up a such complexity is not an agreement with this

or that kind of ‘organic’ thinking. Nor is it a kind of anorganic thinking, for there is life to be taken in consideration. The aim is not to present how life can be conceptualized from an idealist or schematised point of view as in the *Bildungsroman* or the purely naturalistic novel. Instead the aim is to allow the complex diversity of real life have an impact on the presentation of the changes the protagonist is undergoing throughout the novel. This impact is manifested partly in the way the protagonist and the changes are described from sequence to sequence, and partly in the differentiations of style and compositional modes. The novel *Fru Marie Grubbe* is an outstanding example of this. It served, by the way, as the main target for Vilhelm Andersen’s and Paul V. Rubow’s harsh criticism of Jacobsen’s apparently Naturalist and Darwinist tendencies, as in Vilhelm Andersen when calls the novel a “search down towards the human animal”.

### **VELOCITY IN *FRU MARIE GRUBBE***

In Chapter 62 of the first part of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* Robert Musil introduces a phenomenon he calls “a movable balance” (ein bewegliches Gleichgewicht). In another statement Musil claims, that “man changes himself but not himself”.

J.P. Jacobsen’s novel *Fru Marie Grubbe* (1876) represents a significant and complex means of modelling such processes. The core of the novel is constituted by the alternations of the same en-

tity, namely the main character Marie Grubbe. But more importantly, throughout the novel these alternations constantly shift between very rapid or sudden changes, and slow and gradual changes. Such changes characterize both the way of life of the character and the discursive process of the text.

The pivotal point of the novel is the gradual and at the same time disruptive transformation in which a charming and seductive young seventeenth-century noble-woman, Marie Grubbe, relentlessly changes into an outcast. The transformation is impelled by her relationships with four men. As long as she is young, beautiful, and seductive, she is destructive and power-seeking in behaviour, manner, and thinking. When she becomes an old woman, with the status of an outcast living together with the violent ferryman Søren Ladefoged, she is shown to be a wise, patient, and hard-working woman. This transformation can be conceived of as a kind of crossing from a beautiful outward appearance and a cruel mind to an ugly outward appearance and an inner wisdom. This transformation creates at least three main characters in the novel through the division of Marie Grubbe into a young, a middle-aged, and an old Marie Grubbe. The astonishing lack of any inner or organic coherence in describing this transformation has been a topic of vital discussion in the critical reception of Jacobsen's novel. It is repeated in the general structure of the novel. In the subtitle Jacobsen uses the term "interiør" meaning

“scenery”, “setting” or “tableau”, and the novel is a series of quasi-autonomous tableaux.

It is precisely this unifying division of the very same entity, the same person, the same novel, the same text, into isolated parts which, in its refined compositional multi-dimensional network, constitutes the quintessence of Jacobsen’s contribution not only to early modernist Danish literature, but also to any modern, non-romantic conception of literary history (Erslev Andersen 2003, 2004). The novel offers at least two rather different modes of transformation that can be captured in terms of their velocities. Throughout the novel the name Marie Grubbe signifies the same body. The changing of Marie Grubbe’s bodily desire is hardly recognizable. Yet, the name Marie Grubbe also signifies the person embedded in conversions of her ethical and emotional attitudes. Obviously, the name Marie Grubbe denotes the main character throughout the novel, from its intense beginning to its quiet fading out. But this character is by no means an organic unity. On the contrary, Marie Grubbe, as well as the novel itself, forms an assemblage of isolated parts devoid of any kind of inner coherence. The differentiating strategies of *Fru Marie Grubbe*, character and novel alike, point out two connected levels: one of chronological disruptions, and one of changing velocity related to the rapid or slow transformations of body and mind.

Elsewhere, I have introduced the term “compositional heterogeneity” as the most proper designation for the main principle of composition in J. P. Jacobsen’s *oeuvre* (Erslev Andersen 1998). In the case of *Fru Marie Grubbe*, this principle results in a poetics of various or unstable levels of style, now interacting dialectically into the same textual sequences, now establishing a contrapuntal serial order of contrasting parts of the text as poly-stylistic process with the overall effect that the different tableaux are only loosely interconnected in a narrative logic, if interconnected at all. The switch from one tableau to another, from scenery to scenery, is abrupt and unmediated, producing no illusions of connection between the scenes, of any organic unity.

The two kinds of velocity posed in the novel concern two aspects of the same entity, Marie Grubbe, identified with both character and novel. Only a few narrative trajectories in the novel can be ascribed to bodily desires, that is to naturalistic or Darwinist concepts of sexual instincts as a basic human principle. At the same time, the character Marie Grubbe, as well as the novel itself, is basically unpredictable, monstrous, and desultory, portraying the narrative logic of the crossings of inner and outer qualities. Here, one may be reminded of Spinoza’s Aristotelian reflections on bodily motion:

A body in motion or at rest must be determined to motion or rest by another body, which was also determined to motion or rest by another,

and that in its turn by another, and so on *ad infinitum*. (Spinoza 2001: 58)

The velocity of *Fru Marie Grubbe* seems to be linked intimately to the description of the body, by those parts focusing on the body within the ample descriptive sequences of the novel. Here Marie Grubbe is represented first as young and “fast”, then as middle-aged and “thick-blooded”, and finally as old and “slow”. Each stage is closely interwoven with the general stylistic and compositional features of the novel. Some of these orchestrate the textual flow in interchanging slow and rapid modes. This incongruous speed then becomes an act of stylistic-compositional reflection or rather an interpretation of the incongruity of different moments in time and space. This complex way of dealing with the same entity outlines a non-historicist conception of the interplay between becoming and vanishing, continuity/tradition, related here to the contrast between stable bodily desire and discontinuity/modernity – here related to the disruptive moments of the interpretational impact of textual composition.

All this is easily connected to the reflections about the “the spiritual aspect of a human being” in the letter to Edvard Brandes. The considerations concern J. P. Jacobsen’s novel in particular, though they also implicitly raise more general reflections on literary history as a very complex interplay between sequentially narrated moments of very slow and very fast conversions of the con-

ceptions and functions of the same work of literature, thus producing a permanently changing disjunction between work and history.

From this perspective it becomes obvious that “body” is a suitable metaphor for the permanent reappearance of the same discursive figure or entity, but in changing occurrences, a transhistoric mode concerning genres, literary forms, and ontological *topoi*. The changes of this “body” of literary history are very slow, existing beyond history, if history is to be conceived of as an act of chronology and time-development (Doody 1996). By comparison, “mind” is then a suitable metaphor for disruptive or singular moments of radical change in our ways of understanding the formal and referential elements of a given work of literature due to its more or less radical reorientation of genres, literary forms, ideas, or ontological *topoi*. “Mind” also, in this Jacobsenian sense of the word, finds itself in a position beyond history. These two non-historicist modes of literary history point, in my opinion, to the complex interplay between “body”, conceived of as tradition, and “mind”, conceived of as modernity (Erslev Andersen 2004).

### **THE LACKING RED ANCHORING ROPE**

It is obvious, that there is no main thread in Jacobsen’s portrait of Marie Grubbe. Neither is it possible to find main threads in his portraits of the main characters in the short story “Mogens” and

the novel *Niels Lyhne*. Especially *Niels Lyhne* lacks any kind of main thread, not only in the portrait of the protagonist, but also in the composition of the novel and the outstanding use of various forms of stylistic patterns that are themselves lacking any kind of 'inner' coherence.

Thus the texts are similar to what Jacobsen calls the mind or spiritual side of a human being. Every single text has its own characteristics, often resulting in new genre forms as for example the arabesques, the sketches ("Fra Skitsebogen", "To Verdener") and the stylistics and sequential sceneries of the novels. The complexity of the single text is created by elements gathered from very different places and sources, and the complexity is thus due to the impact of very different conditions, facts and circumstances. The various texts in Jacobsen's oeuvre are to be characterized as non-organic. Nonetheless, they create criss-cross connections through the distinctive use of a textual sewing technique, the texts are not oriental Romantic carpets but rather patchworks of various fragments sewn together in ways, that make the intersections bear most of the signifying endeavour.

This is the most significant principle of the poetics of the lacking red anchoring rope. The red thread is, at least in Danish, a common idiom for the pattern of coherence of a talk, a text, a piece of art and so on. But instead of having a "red thread", Jacobsen has an "anchoring rope". The result is a neologism, a

blended metaphor bringing two different cognitive domains together in one image: to have a pattern of coherence and to be secured and 'grounded' by an anchoring rope while at sea. Jacobsen has but contempt for a such twofolded longing for security. His attitude towards this matter is rather aristocratic and hard-headed: If the books are to be more than complete encyclopaedia of human knowledge, one must throw oneself into the 70.000 fathoms, as Kierkegaard puts it, that is, as Jacobsen puts it, to challenge the intelligence of the spectators, to follow your conviction.

As to the topic of this paper one example is of particular relevance, namely a thematic motive which is active throughout all of Jacobsen's texts, from the very beginning to the very end: The clash between monstrous human nature and biological indifference.

All of Jacobsen's protagonists and narrators are monstrous in the Darwinistic sense of the word. They differ from any given norm or standard. Mogens is a man of nature without any recognizable origin. Marie Grubbe defies any kind of social and religious convention. Niels Lyhne is unfit for life. They only survive through sheer defiance. They are monstrous because they are elements alien to the social environments they are supposed to be a part of. Their monstrosity is due to their acts, and their ways of acting are determined by at least two grounding principles of Jacobsen's universe: their dreams and expectations are encoun-

tered with a sluggish, violent and lethal resistance from that part of the world which lays beyond the world of dreams: Nature in itself, the corporeal body, time and death. This leads to the obvious possibility of establishing an ongoing schism in all of Jacobsen's texts, namely between a monstrous human nature and a biological indifference, both of which can be understood as active forces, and as existing simultaneously. In the early and posthumously published sequence of poems called "Hervert Sperring" the main character has Hervert's grandiose ideas of his own death cut off by real death in a rather harsh and ironical way. In "Fra Skitsebogen" a real lizard suddenly interrupts the description of an 'Italian' page-scenery, and in Jacobsen's last and unfinished text "Doktor Faust", broken off by his own death, death has no meaning unless it is accepted as part of life instead of being repressed by dreams.

Such sudden and often brutal dream and death interactions are in Jacobsen's texts redoubled textually and stylistically by the use of demolishing principles of composition. These principles of composition of the texts are close to being textual quantum leaps: A non-organic and non-growing material transformation of certain poetic quantum leaps. The leaps demarcate as well as link together the various pieces of the single text, whereby they mark the most advanced signifying endeavours of Jacobsen's poetics.

The developments and changes of the protagonists are not determined primarily by aptitudes and goal orientated activities, instead the protagonists are heavily influenced by different social environments. The protagonists are thus organisms reacting either without any or with only faint remembrances of earlier events, they are to a certain extent focusing and reflecting on any given social environment and its here and now. This is certainly not to be conceived of as a variation of the naturalistic principle of the significance of heredity and environment. It is rather to be considered a double principle of the continuity of the reactive patterns and a discontinuity of the development of the mind, “the spiritual side of a human being”, as Jacobsen puts it in his letter. None such patterns and developments are initial determinants given once and for all at the very beginning of the novel. On the contrary, they are very changeable and counteractive and thus unpredictable forces determined by their placing in the plot as well as in the textual composition.

The foundation for such reactive behaviour is in the aptitudes of the organism and in its way of organizing sexual impulses. It is, meanwhile, of importance to recognize that the aptitudes and impulse regulations are stable throughout the life of the protagonist as well as the text, they undergo no changes, no cultivations, no destructions. The only really significant changes take place in the purely mental, and thus non-corporeal, parts of the organisms,

that is, in the mind. Thus, the protagonists undergo both extremely radical changes and no changes at all. On the one hand, they are unchangeably bound to the same reactive patterns concerning desire and impulse. On the other hand, they undergo abrupt changes due to unpredictable and inevitable events in the specific environments they try to take part in. Death, violence, real, inhumane cuts, that is, in an imaginary order.

It is Marie Grubbe who most significantly at the end of the novel expresses such a double principle when she confirms to Ludvig Holberg that every human being has its own independent life; that every human being lives its own life according to the given life conditions; that it is not a given fact that you only have one soul; and that you die your own death without guilt. The human mind is complex and capable of making adjustments to different environments in a way quite different from the body, it adjusts only by biological indifference. This interaction between the very slow evolution of the body and the very rapid and unpredictable changes of the mind is then, at least in my opinion, the grounding principle of what Jacobsen designates “the nature of man” – “Menneskenaturen”.

This is perhaps the most significant pattern in all of Jacobsen’s texts, a literary science of nature embedded in a row of different genres and texts. They are as monstrous and differing as are the protagonists and narrators. This is not to be named a kind of Dar-

winism focusing on the survival of the fittest. Perhaps it is a kind of poetic thinking, anticipating what is later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century designated by the name “Neo-Darwinism”, a very complex natural scientific endeavour occupied exactly with the monstrous and the differing of given entities to be the grounding principle for genetic developments in unpredictable quantum leaps.

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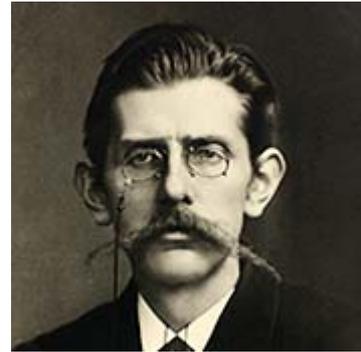
**Paper, Scandinavian Department, University of Wisconsin, Madison March 31, 2003**

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**Jørn Erslev Andersen**

## **The Fashionable J.P. Jacobsen 1900 and 2000**

To be honest, I really don't think the Danish author Jens Peter Jacobsen ever belonged to the fashionable world. Not by his way of living, that is. He surely was no Dandy, and when portrayed the only remarkable thing is not his clothing but his rather extraordinary long and carefully waxed moustache and the fancy pince-nez.



But he has always been considered a bit kinky. He was a bachelor and had some more or less secret relations to a couple of rather fashionable women. This is however not the reason for calling him kinky. The reason is due to his writings. From the moment he published his first novel *Fru Marie Grubbe* (1876) he was considered a bit of a failure of a Brandesean Naturalist. He was also considered a very talented writer, and, of course, due to the core of the novel, something of a kinky man with great ability with regard to female sexuality and sado-masochism. In the official Scandinavian, especially Danish, literary history this understanding of J.P. Jacobsen, as belonging to the early Scandinavian Naturalism and his to a certain extent too stylish *écriture*, has been immensely persistent. In this sense he shares a kind of lite-

rary historical fate with another famous Danish author, namely Herman Bang. Jens Peter Jacobsen is a rather remote and bleak *auteur* whilst Herman Bang is known to be queer, melancholic, and dandy-like.

They shared neither interests nor company. Nonetheless it was Bang who, in a collection of essays entitled *Realisme og Realister* (1879), published some of the best and most farsighted comments on Jacobsen. Farsighted, because Bang is the only contemporary Scandi-



navian writer who takes seriously the so called lack of composition in Jacobsen, whereby he anticipates the praise of Jacobsen's style and compositional patterns among German writers and critics around 1900, as well as the Danish understanding of Jacobsen at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The cause for Bang's farsightedness may be his own experiences as an author up front. The cause may also be his famous melancholic and dandy-like sensibility. Actually, you could find stylistic resemblances of great sensibility between Jacobsen and Bang. Still, their stylistics and compositional patterns are very different. And when it comes to a description of

them as *auteurs* the differences become even more obvious. It is to a certain extent possible to establish connections between Herman Bang's being dandy-like, melancholic, queer, journalist, columnist, traveller and metropolitan *and* the sensibility, the quiet, remote or distant realism in most of the short-stories, the harsh and resignative Naturalism in *Haabløse Slægter* and the criss-cross of Naturalism and Impressionism in "Franz Pander" and *Stuk*.

I am not in any way a biographical reader or scholar. I only mention this picture of Herman Bang as *auteur* to compare it to Jacobsen as *auteur*. Contrary to Bang, it is either *too easy* or *quite impossible* to find reasonable links between writer and text in Jacobsen. Neither Jacobsen as person nor his texts offer any kind of definite quality with regard to gender questions, psychological patterns or textual strategies. As *auteur* he is – kinky, but in a way that questions not the gender of the man but the shaping of the texts. What kind of 'auteuristic' or 'textual' images are then inherent in the 'author-function' (Michel Foucault) signed by the name of J.P. Jacobsen; are the images, you may ask, embedded at all in male images?

## I

Around 1900 the different literary cultures have very contradictory 'auteuristic' images of Jacobsen indeed. In Denmark the in-

fluent literary historian (or constructionist) Vilhelm Andersen resumes the widespread Scandinavian image of Jacobsen as a Naturalistic and thus laboratoristic writer. His long section on Jacobsen in *Illustreret dansk Litteraturhistorie* IV (1925) even today has some influence on the image of Jacobsen as a prominent example of the Danish Naturalism. Following V. Andersen, Jacobsen is a scientist of botany, a Darwinist thinker and an analytical writer with an admirable sense for stylistics, nature and human sensations. In my opinion Vilhelm Andersen affirms a rather rigid and dogmatic image of Jacobsen the Naturalist. I have devoted some of my time during the last 10 years to destroying as completely as possible this image, but that's not the topic of this paper.

At the same time, around 1900, some quite different images of Jacobsen as *auteur* can be found especially in Germany and more occasionally in England. In the brief after word to Tiina Nunnally's very much acclaimed translation of *Niels Lyhne* (Fjord Press 1990), Eric O. Johannesen pays attention to the well-known fact, that Jacobsen became a mentor to the Austrean poet Rainer Maria Rilke. "To Rilke", he writes, "Jacobsen obviously ranked with Kierkegaard and Ibsen in importance along with his other great mentor, the sculptor Auguste Rodin". Johannesen has a quotation from a letter from Rilke, dated April 2, 1904, to the Swedish feminist author Ellen Key in which he writes:

I first read Jacobsen in 1896-97 in Munich. I was very immature then and read sensing rather than observing, first *Niels Lyhne*, since *Marie Grubbe*. Since then these books, to which were added in 1898 the “six short stories” and the letters, have been influential in all my developments; and even today my experience with them is that, wherever I may be standing, always, every time I want to go on, I find the next, the next higher, the approaching stage of my growth sketched out and already created in them. In these books most of what the best people are seeking even today is already found, derived from one life at least. Jacobsen and Rodin, to me they are the two inexhaustible ones, the masters. (211-2)

Rilke’s being heavily inspired by the novel *Niels Lyhne* when writing his own novel *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* is, as you may know, a common topic in modern European literary history. Also the young Thomas Mann was inspired by Jacobsen when writing his short novel *Tonio Kröger* (1903). To the list also belongs such authors as Stefan George, Hermann Hesse, Arnold Schönberg and many others from the German literary and musical culture around 1900. In England it is especially the composer Fredrick Delius who, in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, paid attention to Jacobsen by composing songs to some of his poems and by composing a small opera based on some parts of *Niels Lyhne*. His opera composition and staging are famous because he on the one hand grasps the sequential compositional patterns in Jacobsen

in an interesting way, and on the other hand creates a play which anticipates what later in the century will be known as serial TV-plays.

These images of Jacobsen as *auteur* are indeed very different. In Denmark the peculiar obsession with Jacobsen's Naturalism and especially his kinky personality persists due to Paul V. Rubow's taste for French literature, which makes him consider Jacobsen nothing but a totally failed Naturalist, and in vast books on Jacobsen's apparently sado-masochist tendencies by Frederik Nielsen and Jørgen Holmgaard. In Germany Jacobsen's role as *the* modern author par excellence fades out after the First World War. Of interest here are these very different images. From Vilhelm Andersen on the Danish reception of Jacobsen becomes dogmatic and rigid, he is but a representative of Naturalism and of the so called Modern Breakthrough. From the 1970'es and 1980'es, due to scholars as Finn Stein Larsen, Peer E. Sørensen and Jørn Vosmar, the obsession with Jacobsen's fancy or kinky or whatever personality is broken, instead it now finally becomes fashionable to focus on his texts.

In German literary history around 1900 one often comes across the term "die Jacobsen Mode". Jacobsen was fashionable as an image of what the German and Austrian writers and composers could not find in their own culture: The anti-hero Niels Lyhne and Jacobsen's ability to bring together in the same figure a weak and

decadent and sensitive *and natural* kind of aestheticism and humanism. To sign your name with Jacobsen's name, as Derrida would put it, was at the same time to sign yourself into the group of ultimately modern, up front, post-nietzschean, decadent, sensitive, fin-de-siècle-like and/or elegiac-ironic authors. The image and signature of Jacobsen vouched for your own status, as culturally *à la mode*.

This is meanwhile not the end of the story. It is amazing to see how much better Jacobsen's texts fit into the German textual and cultural contexts than in the Danish/Scandinavian cultural contexts. Nearly all patterns of the lacking compositional threads, all patterns of the changing between long descriptions and short reality cuts in all his texts, all the thematic patterns, all the sequential ways of composing the texts and so on, all these patterns were admired as stylistic and compositional features in Jacobsen's *oeuvre* by the German writers and critics; whereas any kind of sensibility for this was lacking in the Danish literary critique until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that is, with rare exceptions such as Herman Bang and Edvard Brandes. But at the end of the century the image of the fashionable Jacobsen from German literary culture from 1900 returns, not as a parody as in Karl Marx' 18th brumaire or as the eternal return of the same in new ways as in Friedrich Nietzsche's Zarathustra but simply as an image of Jacobsen as *auteur*, this time though not in the shape of a fashionable sig-

nature and an idealised person, but conceived of as a *textual auteur*. In this way the contemporary Danish criticism of Jacobsen may be at one and the same time displacing and full filling what was going on in German literary culture 100 years earlier.

## II

Now, let's turn to the last part of the initial question of this paper: Are there any male images of Jacobsen as a *textual auteur* to be located in his texts (and not in his biography). Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century he has been considered a weirdo, a voyeur, a scientist, a melancholic, a failure, a Praeraffaelit writer, a fin-de-siècle decadent weak man with transparent senses, a blue moon poet "aus dem Nordischen" and a brutish sado-masochist, to mention but a few of the more prominent attributions. This wide spectrum of interesting images of Jacobsen is of course not accidental. His texts, as you may know, have no fixed gender and no fixed sexual images, on the contrary, the images are very desultory.

The two novels *Marie Grubbe* and *Niels Lyhne* have several famous passages about the sexual desires of the protagonists. A comparison of the first chapter of *Marie Grubbe* to the third chapter of *Niels Lyhne* leads to but a conclusion about how sensitive and remarkably distinct one and the same author can describe *en detail* the awakening sexual desires of a young woman aged 14

and a young boy 12 years of age. I cannot here quote the two crucial scenes *in extenso*, just offer you a sample.

**Marie Grubbe.** Right at the beginning of *Fru Marie Grubbe* the young protagonist is in the flourishing garden of her fathers manor some time in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century somewhere in the middle of Jutland. Playing around, she imagines some cruel sado-masochistic tableaux from some books she consults for sexual pleasure. She then gathers the blossoms of a climbing rose and becomes more and more eager, soon she fills her skirt with flowers, which she carries into an arbor. The text goes on: “She sat down by the table, took them from her lap, and laid one upon the other until the stone was hidden under a fragrant cover of pale roses./ When the last flower had been put in its place, she smoothed the folds of her frock, brushed off the loose petals and green leaves that had caught in the nap, and sat with hands in her lap gazing at the blossoming mass./ This bloom of color, curling in sheen and shadow, white flushing to red and red paling to blue, moist pink that is almost heavy, and lavender light as wafted on air, each petal rounded like a tiny vault, soft in the shadow, but gleaming in the sun with thousands of fine light-points; with all its fair blood-of-rose flowing in the veins, spreading through the skin – and the sweet, heavy fragrance, rising like vapor from that red nectar that seethes in the flower-cup.../ suddenly she turned

back her sleeves, and laid her bare arms in the soft, moist coolness of the flowers. She turned them round and round under the roses, until the loosened petals fluttered to the ground, then jumped up and with one motion swept everything from the table, and went out into the garden, pulling down her sleeves as she walked. With flushed cheeks and quickened step, she followed the path to the end, then skirted the garden toward the turnpike.” (6-7)

**Niels Lyhne.** The 12-year old Niels Lyhne has been asked by his aunt Edele Lyhne to gather some flowers and bring them to her in her room. Very wary he enters her room in the middle of the warm summer day and there she is “stretched out on the sea-green satin of the chaise longue, dressed in a fantastic gypsy costume. She lay there on her back, her chin in the air, her throat extended, her forehead tilted back, and her long, loose hair flowing over the end of the chaise longue and onto the carpet. An artificial pomegranate flower had washed ashore on the island formed by a bronze-colored leather shoe in the middle of the dull-gold stream.” (30) After a long and very intimate description of her dress and body, she asks Niels to bring her a red bottle lying on a crumpled handkerchief by her feet, and the text goes on like this: “Niels went over to it; he was beet-red, and as he bent over those matte-white, gently curved legs and those long, narrow feet that

had something of a hand's intelligence in their finely cradled contours, he felt quite faint; when, at the same moment, the tip of one foot curled down toward with a sudden movement, he was just about to collapse.” (31)

The descriptions of the young Marie Grubbe's activities in the garden focus on her imagination and her bodily desire. The descriptions of Niels Lyhne's beholding of his aunt focus on his distanced glance. The differences of the bodily reactions of the two protagonists to their desires are indeed very well taken in regard to any kind of cultural approach to gender patterns. It is of course possible, I nearly can feel the instant reaction of at least some readers, that Jacobsen's description of the young Marie Grubbe is due to a male image of feminine sexuality. That may be right, but it may also be right that the text in the description of Marie Grubbe flows along a pattern which Hélène Cixous once named “écriture féminine”. To decide anything about these matters is not at all easy, and will of course depend on a closer reading of the texts.

Such intriguing combinations of female and male images in Jacobsen are also to be found in his other texts, especially some of his short stories. I shall only mention one, namely one of his sketches entitled “There Should have been Roses”. This short, very complicated and very tricky text paints a kind of Italian pic-

ture by using very loose wordstrokes. It has a proverb in which two pages discuss matters of happiness and un-happiness. The pages are, in the tradition of the Middle Ages, young men played by young women. The text puts some stress on this double-sided gendering of the players. First, they are presented as young boys, then the text presents some biographic details of the female players. This sudden change in the text from 'he' to 'she' is easily compared to the double-bound play of the text itself, that is, its oscillation between being a wordstroke and a text about reality and illusion.

All of Jacobsen's texts have at least one significant changing of stylistic features. They change between being on the one hand very long and metonymic passages, in the sense of Roman Jakobson, loaded with exquisite adjectives *and*, on the other hand, very short, condensed and often rather cutting sentences. The changing between these two modes often follows the same scheme. First the text presents a vast metonymic description of a person, an interior or a scenery of nature. Then the text cuts this description off by putting a short down-to-earth phrase at the endings of the descriptions. This pattern could of course easily be considered an interplay between an *écriture féminine* and a penetrating, and thus 'fallic' way of writing. I am not stating this as a fact, only as a possibility.

I might be tempted to call all the abovementioned images *not male but androgyne* images. By using a phrase from the Finnish-Swedish poet Edith Södergran one could then make the texts signed by the name Jens Peter Jacobsen say: “I am not a male, I am not a female, I am a Neutrum”. This odd, kinky, tricky or remarkable gender position of Jacobsen’s texts could then, if reliable at all, be one of the main reasons why his oeuvre persistently challenges very male critiques such as Georg Brandes, Vilhelm Andersen, Paul V. Rubow, Frederik Nielsen, and Jørgen Holmgaard. It is precisely the very same reasons that made Jacobsen an inspiring author for writers such as Herman Bang, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Thomas Mann.

As to male images and textual positions of sexuality and gender topics Jacobsen’s texts thus are very difficult to deal with. I consider them being beyond the limits of common and culturally shaped questions of gender and discourse. They are androgyne or neutral. That is, maybe, the reason why today they should not be taken as embedded in male images, something that becomes quite clear when dealing with the fashionable Jacobsen around 1900 and the very different male images among his many readers and critiques.

I shall end this short paper by leaving you with a brief quotation by Jacques Lacan, a quotation which on the one hand gives a good impression of what kind of written text we are dealing with

when reading Jacobsen, and on the other hand may be useful for the many readers who have the peculiar idea that a text has an unconscious and that it imagines gender positions. The quotation is from book XX of the seminar of Jacques Lacan, is located in the section about “The Function of the Written” and goes like this: “In your analytic discourse, you assume that the subject of the unconscious knows how to read. And this business of true unconscious is nothing other than that. Not only do you assume that it knows how to read, but you assume that it can learn how to read. The only problem is that what you teach it to read has absolutely nothing to do, in any case, with what you can write of it” (*The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XX*, translated by Bruce Fink, New York 1999: W.W Norton & Company, page 37).

**Paper, SASS (Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies), May 2, 2003, University of Minnesota**

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## J.P. JACOBSEN SELSKABET

J.P. Jacobsen Selskabet blev stiftet i 1958 for at redde digterens fødehjem i Thisted fra nedrivning. Huset blev året efter restaureret og rummer i dag Lokalthistorisk Arkiv for Thisted Kommune. J.P. Jacobsen Selskabets formål er at medvirke til at bevare og fremme interessen for J.P. Jacobsens litteratur og liv, samt værne om Jacobsen-minder.

Gennem årene har selskabet bidraget til at udgive publikationer om Jacobsen, arrangere foredrag, studiekredse og koncerter. Senest samarbejder selskabet med Afdeling for Litteraturhistorie ved Aarhus Universitet om oprettelse og drift af en hjemmeside om Jacobsens forfatterskab, samt udgivelse af en ny skriftserie, ”Jacobseniana. Skrifter fra J.P. Jacobsen Selskabet”. Skriftserien udsendes gratis til selskabets medlemmer.

J. P. Jacobsen Selskabet har fysisk hjemsted på Museet for Thy og Vester Hanherred, Jernbanegade i Thisted. Museet og Selskabet har et tæt og godt samarbejde. Museet rummer en mindestue for Jacobsen og formidler på fornem vis viden om hans liv og baggrund.

J.P. Jacobsen Selskabet afholder hvert år generalforsamling på forfatterens fødselsdag, den 7. april, og i tilknytning hertil holdes et offentligt foredrag. Et medlemskab koster 100 kr. om året. Indmeldelse i Selskabet kan ske ved henvendelse til **Thisted Mu-**

seum tlf. 9792 0577 (mandag-fredag kl. 8-16). Eller pr. e-mail til [thistedmuseum@mail.tele.dk](mailto:thistedmuseum@mail.tele.dk)

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# Givree

Engels

## I. Middags.

Der ligger en Drist af Touristlyrik  
Alt isdover Givree Vange  
Hvad her der skal føls ved for en Drik  
Man gjenner de kjendte Dange.  
Alt er beredt, de kvindelige Sæder  
Kvintogen gjerke enkelte Stæder  
Viu dig hvor det er Skid at begjeter.  
Dybt er Stormen, en engelisk Park  
Dybt er Slottet, det var for en Mark.  
Da Slottet er kjent  
Kors og Clementis blomstrende Mark  
Og Kirkens grønt  
Slange om Mørene og om Tårne.  
Oppe der Stormen? her er Tårn  
Dybt er Slottet, saa er Stormen der Mark:  
Slottet er allraa  
Sokkel, og andet.

X

22

Dybt er Moralens  
Vidd er den Kyndt.  
Det er jo Forbids  
Slum Betydning  
At den til Fremtid  
Mogte at bære  
Kædet paa den den  
Ovej den af Misket  
Bragte den Dæg. (23/7 1869.)

II.

Valdemar.

= "det Dæmring"  
S. 86 i "Kædet Dæmring"

Afslod for Salen den den  
De vestlige Skyer i Brand  
For Walter Dæmring røder  
Udover det tavne Land.

Afslod fra den gamle Skove  
Og vakkende Bølge Pragt  
Men Gal den her af rove  
En Kamp med Dæmringens Slagt

X  
+

I Klade-Bogen indledes «Gurresange» med Digtet:

### M i d d a g.

---

Der ligger en Duft af Tourist- Lyrik  
Alt ud over Gurre Vange;  
Hvad her skal føles, véd paa en Prik  
Man gennem de kjendte Sange.  
Alt er beredt, naturlige Sæder,  
Kunstigen gjorde, enkelte Steder  
Vise Dig, hvor det er Skik at begejstres.  
Dejlig er Skoven, en engelsk Park,  
Pyntelig Slottet, det ses for en Mark.

Ja Slottet er kjønt,  
Rosers og Clematis, blomstrende Ranker  
Og Kirkegaardsgrønt  
Slynge om Murene sig og om Tanker.

Øjner Du Stenen? læs i en Fart  
Indskriften; saa, nu skuer du klart:

Slottet er altsaa  
Sokkel, ej andet.

Dyb er Moralen,  
Vidt er den kjendt.  
Det er jo Fortids  
Store Betydning,  
At den til Fremtid  
Mægter at bære  
Navnet paa den, der  
Drog den af Mørket,  
Bragte den Dag.

23/7 67.

