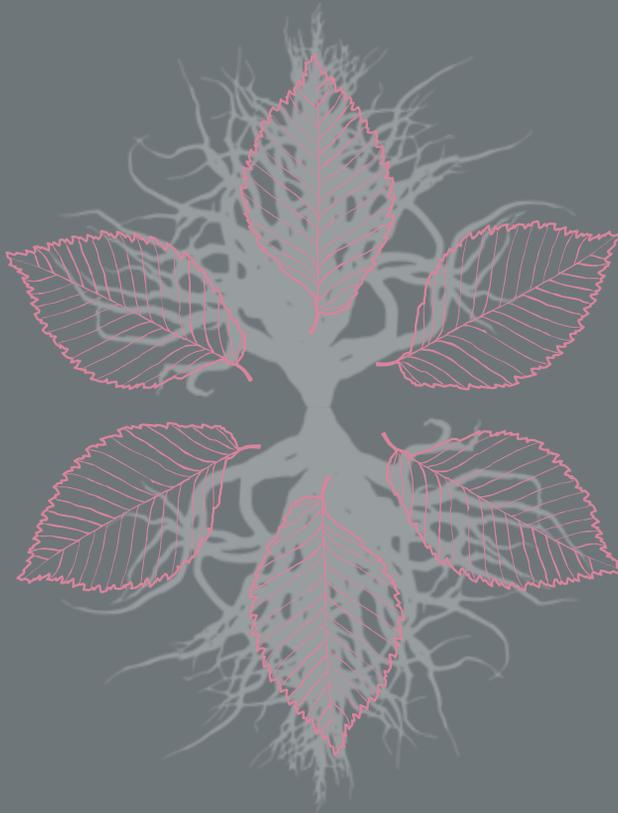


# GENRE AND ...

Copenhagen Studies in Genre 2



Ekbatana

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Ed. Sune Auken,  
Palle Schantz Lauridsen, &  
Anders Juhl Rasmussen

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## Copenhagen Studies in Genre 2

Edited by  
Sune Auken, Palle Schantz Lauridsen,  
& Anders Juhl Rasmussen

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*Genre and ...*  
*Copenhagen Studies in Genre 2*

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& Anders Juhl Rasmussen

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# **Copenhagen Studies in Genre**

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# READING GENRE

# GENRE AND WORKING CLASS FICTION

Beata Agrell

THIS ARTICLE DEALS with literary genres, especially narrative fiction of working-class origin.<sup>1</sup> Though literary genres are special cases among genres, they are still *speech genres*, representing typified *rhetorical actions* and *cognitive schemata*, just like every day and professional genres. These aspects are fundamental to the concept of genre that will be developed in what follows. Accordingly, some explanation might be warranted before my main discussion of working-class fiction can begin.

Rhetorically understood, as Carolyn Miller explains, a genre is “a complex of formal and substantive features that create a particular effect in a given situation. Genre, in this way, becomes more than a formal entity; it becomes pragmatic, fully rhetorical, a point of connection between intention and effect, an aspect of social action” (1984, p. 153). Genres thereby also provide cognitive schemata and establish schematic worlds,<sup>2</sup> “setting up patterns of meaning and response relative to particular communicative functions and situations,” as John Frow has it (2007, p. 1631). A *schema* is a pattern that underlies a surface phenomenon and permits us to understand it: it is a knowledge-structure deriving from a person’s prior knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> For constructive criticism I thank professor Mats Malm and senior lecturer Christer Ekholm, Gothenburg University, as well as the participants of the Symposium on Norrland Working-Class Literature, Härnösand, Febr. 10–11, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> On schemata, see Frow, 2005, p. 132; 2007, p. 1631f.; Keunen, 2000, p. 3f.; p. 8f.; Iser, 1976/1980, p. 21; p. 90-93; and *passim*. On schematic genre worlds, see Seitel, 2003, p. 279; p. 281; Frow, 2005, p. 130; p. 132; Frow, 2007, p. 1631f.; and see also the chapter by Auken in [this volume](#).

(Frow, 2005, p. 132; Keunen, 2000, p. 3). The units of a schema are both linguistic and pragmatic; and the pragmatic units correspond to genres as *ways of seeing* (Keunen, 2000, pp. 4). By mediating such schematic forms of conceptual organization for (everyday, professional, and literary) rhetorical ends, genres are thus not so much taxonomic systems as they are instruments of knowledge, interpretation, and communication. Because these forms/schemas change, genres are not closed and static, but formative and dynamic, adaptable for use on various social rhetorical occasions, and historically changing.<sup>3</sup>

Literary genres, however, are often said to lack a social-rhetorical occasion for their use, due to their fictional and allegedly purely aesthetic character.<sup>4</sup> But this is the case only with modern aestheticist literature after Kant; and even there we find exceptions, as Christel Sunesen argues in this book.<sup>5</sup> In fact, all texts are to be regarded as utterances motivated by some state of things. From a reception-historical perspective, it is argued that each literary genre has a *Sitz im Leben*, that is, each text is an answer to a current personal and/or socio-cultural situation, as is emphasized by H. R. Jauss (1979, p. 209).<sup>6</sup> This situation, in turn, is associated with an *exigence*, that is, the core of the rhetorical situation, according to Miller: “an objectified social need” that calls for, or at least motivates, utterance and

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<sup>3</sup> This aspect is frequently emphasized; see, e.g., Frow, 2007, p. 1628f., and Fowler, 1982, p. 24; 45; 47, chapters 10 and 11.

<sup>4</sup> Fowler (1982), Miller (1984), and see the chapter by Sunesen in the present volume. See also Frow, 2007, p. 1630.

<sup>5</sup> See the chapter by Sunesen in the present volume.

<sup>6</sup> For *Sitz im Leben*, see also Byrskog (2007): “The occasion is constituted by the roles of the participants. The task of understanding the history of the literary type by reference to its *Sitz im Leben* therefore means to ask who speaks in each situation, what kind of audience is present, what the atmosphere is like, and which effect is intended. The situation as a whole, with its various actors and dynamics, needs to be grasped” (p. 4); “*Sitz im Leben* is a typical situation or condition (“*Verhaltensweise*”) in the life of a community, not a single historical event, though Bultmann seems to think of more specific communal situations. Each collective situation or condition exhibits quite definite characteristics and needs which foster particular styles, forms and types of literature” (p. 5).

action.<sup>7</sup> While the concept of exigence has been criticized for deterministic tendencies (Miller, 1984, p. 155f), in this article it will refer to the fact that all texts respond to a more or less problematic situation—social, ideological, existential—that motivates them. The character of this situation influences the design of the text, both genre and rhetoric, though without determining it.<sup>8</sup> Exigence in this sense, however, is not all: just as important for the textual design is the presumed *addressee*, as the addressee is not always part of the original situation. The task of the text as rhetorical action is precisely to *render* the addressee a participant.

In modern literature, the exigence more often triggers a way of using a chosen genre than it does the genre in itself; but the pragmatic importance of the exigence is undeniable. Without it, literature would be of no concern to anybody. An underlying assumption for this article is thus that all literature is pragmatically situated and permeated with *addressivity*—the central quality of an utterance being *directed to* someone;<sup>9</sup> and so are literary genres.

My explicit focus in this article, however, will be on the rise of a new kind of socially engaged literature, partly without canonical roots, and on problems of genre that pertain to lowbrow hybridity and multigeneric origin. An off-canonical predicament does not prevent literary experimentation, or even protomodernist strategies; but such tendencies were not much acknowledged during the period of early Swedish working-class fiction.<sup>10</sup> My aim is to discover how addressivity and form-shaping ideolo-

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<sup>7</sup> The concept derives from Lloyd F. Bitzer (1968), and is further developed by Miller (1984, p. 157); see the chapter by Sunesen in the present volume.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the idea of literary history as a dialogue in Jauss (1982/1989).

<sup>9</sup> On addressivity, see Bakhtin, 1952-1953/1986, p. 95.

<sup>10</sup> On symbolist and would-be expressionist tendencies in Gustav Hedenvind-Eriksson and Martin Koch, see Svensson (1974) and Algulin (1988, p. 38; 46; 48; 52f.; 56f.; 58).

gies are generated from such mixtures,<sup>11</sup> how cognitive schemata are set at work, and how generic worlds as *chronotopes*<sup>12</sup> can mediate the themes. To this end, I will study the emergence of the first Swedish-working class fiction in the early 1900s through a merging of narrative traditions in the margins of the canonical trends of classic realism, symbolism, and proto-modernisms of the day. Most of these traditions were lowbrow, pragmatic, and often Christian-didactic—dealing with the moral *exemplum*, the devout religious story, and visionary literature—as well as such popular genres as the sketch, the causerie, the Romance, and the crime story. Nevertheless, non-fictional and non-narrative genres could also be of use, like the meditation, the sermon, the agitational speech, and the lecture. The early working-class authors were mostly autodidacts, without access to the bourgeois educational tradition, even though educational endeavors within the Labour movement, such as libraries, study-circles and folk high schools, did eventually introduce selected canonical works and authorships.<sup>13</sup>

As hinted at above, short genres were of special importance. This is because the popular literary heritage was built on such genres, and they supplied compositional means—e.g., an additive structure and embedding as a device—even for complex secondary speech-genres like novels (Bakhtin, 1986; cf. Auken, [this volume](#)).

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<sup>11</sup> The word “form-shaping,” roughly meaning “form-creating,” is the technical term used in English translations of Bakhtin and by his English commentators. Since Bakhtin is a central theoretical source in this paper, I use the same term.

<sup>12</sup> On chronotopes, see Bakhtin (1981), and below.

<sup>13</sup> Those often mentioned as inspiring today were, at the time, non-canonical foreign working-class authors such as Maxim Gorky, Martin Andersen Nexø, Johan Falkberget, Upton Sinclair, Jack London, B. Traven, Väinö Linna, and Émile Zola (Furuland & Svedjedal (2006), 28), in addition to popular Swedish authors like August Strindberg, Viktor Rydberg, and the so-called *nittitalisterna* (Gustaf Fröding, Verner Heidenstam, E. A. Karlfeldt, and Selma Lagerlöf). It is not clear, however, how well-known these authors were for autodidacts outside the libraries of the Worker’s Educational Association.

More important still: these inherited lowbrow genres also mediated underdog ways of seeing, generating different form-shaping ideologies from those of the genres of the canonized literature. This is the case even with the Christian genres, whose idea of brotherly love was transformed into the idea of class solidarity (Godin, 1994, pp. 116). Early working-class fiction, therefore, dealt with genres associated with different literary repertoires,<sup>14</sup> different cognitive schemata, and different chronotopes than the contemporary acknowledged literature.

### **WORKING-CLASS LITERATURE, GENRE, AND CHRONOTOPE**

These perspectives also have a bearing on one of this article's underlying questions, namely: what of the generic status of working-class fiction as a whole? Is it a genre—and if not, what else might it be? A final answer is not to be given here, sufficient for present purposes is the concept of a cluster of many genres, interrelated by an underdog perspective (Furuland & Svedjedal, 2006, p. 24). The point of the question of genre is not to reach a definition, but to find a generic perspective that pays attention to the productive, formative, and dialogical aspects of genres: how they guide the coming into being of texts in reading and writing; their addressivity in rhetorical action; their transformation in tradition; their reception in context; and their constituting schemata, life-worlds, and ways of seeing.

This is where the *chronotope* comes in. With this much-discussed, originally Bakhtinian concept, I refer to a cognitive schema that organizes the concrete interweaving of time and space in a narrative world of setting and plot (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250.). This means that chronotopes are not purely formal phenomena, but rather, as Keunen (2000) formulates it, “mental constructions that take shape in the pragmatic interaction with texts” (p. 5), when a writer or reader negotiates the spatio-temporal rela-

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<sup>14</sup> On repertoire, see Fowler, 1982, chapter 4; Iser, 1976/1980, the section entitled “The Referential System”; and McCormick, 1994, chapter 3.

tions to get to grips with the plot, setting, and situation of the narrative world. In fact, the chronotope corresponds to the “generic narrative worlds” that Seitel (2003, p. 281) describes, as cited by Sune Auken in [this volume](#). The chronotope also gives sensual form to the world-view of a text. It “is a way of understanding experience; it is a specific form-shaping ideology for understanding the nature of events and actions,” Morson and Emerson (1990) explains; and actions “are necessarily performed in a specific context; chronotopes differ by the ways in which they understand context and the relation of actions and events to it” (p. 367). Chronotopes therefore represent a generic knowledge that is the main trigger of literary communication; in a sense, they *are* genres, seen as dialogic strategies within literary communication, based on “cognitive invariants used by writers and readers in order to structure historically and textually divergent semantic elements” (Keunen, 2000, p. 2). As Bakhtin himself emphasizes, chronotopes have “an intrinsic generic significance,” for “it is precisely the chronotope that defines *genre* and *generic* distinctions” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 85). Therefore, Bakhtin contends, they are also what in fact make textual representation and literary experience possible:

It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events. All the novel’s abstract elements—philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect—gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imagining power of art to do its work. (p. 250).

This representational, concretizing, and specifically sensual aspect of the chronotope is further emphasized by the fact that, in Bakhtin’s thought, it refers not only to a general generic schema but also to the level of smaller

semantic units, which coincide with *motifs* (Keunen, 2000, p. 3).<sup>15</sup> The chronotopic generic schema combines a temporal logic with a spatial one, and this combination—unique for the chronotope—generates chronotopic motifs (Keunen, 2000, p. 8). Therefore, the chronotope has two levels of interacting literary schemata: one pertaining to the textual superstructure—the genre—combining setting and plot (p. 7); and one pertaining to the semantic structure of the text, that is, textual elements with the function of chronotopic motifs (p. 8). Chronotopic motifs are various kinds of intersections of space and time: *places* like the road or the threshold; *spatial situations* like the meeting or the conversation; narrative *actions* like “the usurping parvenu”; and *existential events* like search/discovery, recognition/non-recognition. These motifs are “schematic structures belonging to the field of *world knowledge* rather than language knowledge,” and they “enable the reader to concretize and even to reproduce the genological language schemata he associates with a specific motif” (p. 8).<sup>16</sup> Some chronotopic motifs may resemble rhetorical *topoi*, as described by E. R. Curtius (1948/1979, pp. 70; 79), in that they belong to a mental storehouse within a long cultural tradition; but others are modern, and indeed new such motifs may always be invented, as we will see in the following.

The relevance of chronotopes for this article is that the concept will function as a dynamic tool for analysis of textual structures, processes, and motifs as well as of generic schemata, conventions, and expectations governing the texts regarded as generic acts. The concept of chronotope will help in focusing on the generic act as rooted in an exigent rhetorical situation, and in preparing a way of seeing.

As for the question of the genre status of working-class fiction as a whole, it might now be possible to attempt a partial answer. Previous re-

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<sup>15</sup> See also Bemong & Borghart, 2010, pp. 6–8 on micro-chronotopes and other chronotopic variants.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Öhman (2006) on chronotopes materializing time into space as “mental pictures”.

search, leaving the specific question of genre aside, has posed the more general question “What is working-class literature?” The most frequent answer has been that working-class literature is literature *by* workers, *for* workers, *about* workers (Furuland & Svedjedal, 2006, pp. 23). This could mean that working-class literature is governed by a generic schema imbued with a class perspective and a form-shaping ideology associated with such genres as the Revolutionary song and the Proletarian novel, as well as motifs and places such as Labour, the Strike, the Tenement House, and the Worksite. But since working-class literature is, like all cultural phenomena, historically variable, this “definition” is somewhat problematic in post-industrial society. Today we find depicted many new types of exploitative work and exploited wage earners who are not associated with the working-class in the original Marxist sense. Yet a remainder may be left, pertaining to the underdog-perspective imbuing these new texts; and this makes them participate in the same generic tradition as the original working-class literature, whether it is a genre of its own or not—or perhaps a *current*, as has been suggested (Furuland & Svedjedal, 2006, p. 27). Connected to the underdog perspective is a rhetorical dimension that may also serve, in this case, as a generic hallmark, namely, the *exigence* of the repeated situation of these texts. Since exigence is “an objectified social need” that motivates the text as rhetorical act, it is clear that working-class literature is typical in that respect, permeated as it is with social criticism. In its early days, the social criticism of working-class literature was often conveyed in explicit didactic and agitatorial strategies, but what is left today is a pragmatic orientation with a strong addressivity (on answerability see also Hitchcock, 2000, pp. 27).

Thus, working-class literature today is perhaps not a genre but a generic spectrum and a generic tradition characterized by social criticism, an underdog perspective, a pragmatic orientation, and chronotopical worlds of labor and worksites. Working-class fiction is the narrative prose of this tradition; it is a manifold family of texts to whose early interactions I will

now turn. Therefore, my next step will be to contextualize the working-class fiction of the Swedish modernity of the early 1900s.

### THE CULTURAL SITUATION AND ITS HERITAGES

The early 1900s were marked by several intense processes of modernization: industrialization, proletarianization, urbanization, secularization, and mass mediatization: this was the period of the breakthrough of the modern press. The period also includes union crises in 1905, military rearmament, and continuing struggles for the right to vote—including the suffragette movement, political and economic general strikes in 1902 and 1909, respectively, World War I in 1914, food riots in (*inter alia*) 1917, and the 1917 Russian revolution. By this time the Labour movement had become a powerful factor in the Swedish Parliament as well: in 1908 SAP had 34 seats (Uhlén, 1964/1978, p. 94.). But the Labour movement was also marked by inner struggles between reformists and revolutionaries, especially after the general strike in 1909. In 1917, the social-democratic party was split: the revolutionaries were expelled and formed an organization of their own.<sup>17</sup>

This was an economic, social, and political transformation with far-reaching consequences for the cultural and spiritual spheres as well—deep down among the masses. Most remarkable was the so-called *democratization of the Parnassus*, which made it possible for workers and other persons without formal education or cultural networks to publish books and articles in commercial media (Thorsell, 1957/1997, p. 521; Furuland & Svedjedal, 2006, chapter 11). At the same time as the literary avant-garde was experimenting with late symbolism and protomodernism in the school of *l'art pour l'art*, these new groups of authors stepped forward, with quite different backgrounds and orientations. They were recruited not only from

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<sup>17</sup> Sveriges socialdemokratiska vänsterparti, which in 1921 became “Sveriges kommunistiska parti,” the Swedish Communist Party.

the new moneyed bourgeoisie and the journalist guilds, but also from industrial workers and the proletarianized estate of farmers. For these new groups, literature is a question of *realism*—that is, the credible representation of reality.

Most renowned of the new bourgeois authors emerging in the 1910s were the so-called *tiotalister*: Ludvig Nordström (1882–1942), Gustaf Hellström (1882–1953), Sigfrid Siwertz (1882–1970), and, most famously, Hjalmar Bergman (1883–1931). In literary historiography, these are often called *the bourgeois realists*. Some women were also admitted into this discourse, such as Elin Wägner (1882–1949) and Marika Stiernstedt (1875–1954). But this is also the period of Pär Lagerkvist's (1891–1974) début (1912), when the future Nobel Laureate was experimenting with an expressionist aesthetic—a tendency that also typifies Hjalmar Bergman's experimental realism.<sup>18</sup>

Two influential working-class authors of the period were Martin Koch (1882–1940) and Gustav Hedenvind Eriksson (1880–1967)—the two “gateposts,” as they were called by their younger colleagues of the 1930s. But important as well were Dan Andersson (1888–1920), Olof Högberg (1855–1932), Fabian Månsson (1872–1938), Maria Sandel (1870–1927), and Karl Östman (1876–1953)—to a couple of whom I will soon return.

Internationally, as is well known, several future modernist classics emerged at this point: Thomas Mann's novel *Buddenbrooks* in 1901, the first part of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* in 1913, and James Joyce's short story cycle *Dubliners* in 1914. In 1922, Joyce's experimental novel *Ulysses* was published, at the same time as T. S. Eliot's equally experimental long poem *The Waste Land*. This erudite and complex literature claimed a deeper truth than the inherited realism of the 1800s was supposed to give.

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<sup>18</sup> For an overview, see Lönnroth & Delblanc, 1999, p. 453–570, and Furuland & Svedjedal, 2006.

This means, among other things, that the concept of *Realism* was problematized. For *which* truth and reality is realist literature was to depict? To *whom* does that truth and reality belong? Finally, what criteria of reliability should be acknowledged?<sup>19</sup> Such questions were answered differently by different texts. The answers, in their turn, were determined by each individual author's interpretation of reality—the more or less “modern” reality that s/he had experienced, and that his/her language could express. And these interpretations turned out to be associated with different *perspectives of value*. Modernity meant a high evaluation of the individual and of individual responsibility and initiative. This was emphasized by the Labour movement too, but not in terms of individualism: the individual's possibilities could be liberated only within the social community of class solidarity; the solitary individual, by contrast, was at the mercy of social forces beyond his or her individual control (Godin, 1994, p. 61-64).

Education was important as well. The conception of reality to which the bourgeois authors gave literary form was marked not only by their personal experiences, but equally by *other literature*: the literary tradition and literary conventions that were part of the bourgeois educational heritage. The authors from the lower classes, on the other hand, often had only their personal experiences and their own language—at least until they had gone through a folk high school (which not everyone was privileged to do). Their original heritage of literary *Bildung* consisted of the Bible, the psalm book, and current devotional literature; perhaps a few magazines, popular serials and some colportage literature; and finally oral stories of the traditional popular tradition—local or professional, and not least, folklore (as is important in, for example, the works of Karl Östman and Dan

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<sup>19</sup> For these problems of realism, see Lodge, 1977/1997, p. 25, and Eysteinnsson, 1990, p. 194f.

Andersson).<sup>20</sup> This heritage was used more intensely, and in different ways, than in the bourgeois pictures of the life and manners of the common people (Godin, 1994, chapter I). This means that even if the motifs and settings were the same, they were treated so differently that the literary results proved to be very different “realities.”

These are differences of class-perspective that are also associated with different form-shaping ideologies and chronotopic schemata. The intellectual bourgeois authors apply a *von-oben* perspective on the depicted agrarian or proletarian setting: often a mixture of distanced contempt and philanthropic compassion; sometimes even joined with a secret fascination with the “wild” and the “bestial” that was at that time associated with the working classes.<sup>21</sup> That perspective, in short, betrays estrangement, and that estrangement also manifests itself in abstract setting and stereotyped characters. In working-class fiction, external and internal perspective could shift, and certainly also critical authorial positions were possible, as well as a tendency to create types. But it is conclusive that the representation is marked by an intimate knowledge that betrays a class experience different from that of the bourgeois authors (Godin, 1994, pp. 5).

A similar difference characterizes the authors’ relations to their respective cultural heritages and their recycling of the cultural repertoire. The working-class writers’ cultural recycling was more pragmatic than aesthetic, that is, it was oriented toward the reader, material reception, and application rather than toward self-expression and artistic manifestation—even though the dream of authorship was frequent. Biblical quotations were often inserted into everyday speech, even by atheistic authors, such as Sandel and Östman. Well-known techniques of religious popular educa-

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<sup>20</sup> See Furuland & Svedjedal, 2006, chapters 3 and 11. For the relation between early radical working-class literature, the then popular literature, the religious heritage, and melodramatic devices see Hilborn, 2014, p. 53–59; 61–91; 126–129.

<sup>21</sup> Godin, 1994, p. 130f.; Boëthius, 1989, in the section entitled “De farliga arbetarna” [The Dangerous Workers].

tion like the pedagogy of *exemplum*, the technique of figuration, and typological interpretation were quite common—as, for example, in the writings of Fabian Månsson and Fredrik Ström (1880–1948) (Agrell, 2005, p. 187–192). Thus the autodidacts were putting an older, didactic aesthetic into practice, one oriented toward ethical reflection rather than toward disinterested aesthetic pleasure in the spirit of Kant. As has been shown in earlier research, Christian devotional literature encouraged a special meditative way of reading, a special generic competence, one might say, that was inherited and further developed by the Religious Revival Movement—the so-called *läsarna* [“the readers”]—and from there spread into the Labour movement and the other secular popular movements (Furuland & Svedjedal, 2006, chapter 2). This meditative reading was intense and personal: the reader *gömde och begrundade det lästa i sitt hjärta* [kept and meditated on what was read in their hearts], as the Biblical formula had it (cf. Luke 2:51), bringing it to bear on his/her personal situation; but in the Labour movement this generic competence spilled over to other genres, developing a reflexive reading practice on political and literary matters as well.<sup>22</sup>

The moral exemplum and the devout story formed the skeleton of much working-class literature—genres well known to everyone, for instance through *Folkskolans läsebok*, the state elementary schools’ required reader.<sup>23</sup> But that skeleton could carry many things: e.g., a proletarian sketch, a popular melodrama, a journalistic reportage, or a film montage of scenes, or even all of these at once. As pointed out by Johan Svedjedal, devotional literature provided a lowbrow generic spectrum that especially attracted women writers of the time, offering not only ready-made fictional patterns, but also virgin soil for experimentation and formal renewal (Sve-

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<sup>22</sup> For analysis of literary examples, see Agrell, 2003; 2007.

<sup>23</sup> On the moral *exemplum*, see Jauss, 1974, section IV, where the genre is discussed from the perspective of reception history.

djedal, 1994, pp. 83). In this melting pot, one might find doses of impressionistic settings, symbolist wilderness romanticism, and expressionistic stylization (e.g., Furuland & Svedjedal, 2006, p. 119). But influences by canonized authors are also visible, especially by August Strindberg, Viktor Rydberg, Gustaf Fröding, and Verner von Heidenstam—that is, from the liberal humanist heritage of the 1800s. Important names among foreign authors include not only radicals like Émile Zola, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and Maxim Gorky, but also Christians like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. These authors were studied as part of educational activities within the Labour movement and at Brunnsvik, the movement's most important folk high school. One figure often referred to was the philosopher Peter Krapotkin: his doctrine of mutual help challenged the dominant Social Darwinism of the day, and nurtured the Labour movement's conceptions of solidarity.<sup>24</sup> But what was used in individual texts ultimately depended on the author's background, and on what *Bildungsstoff* he or she had come into contact with.

Let us now look at some examples, with special focus on how the interweaving of different genres is guided by different cognitive schemata and form-shaping ideologies so as to create different chronotopic worlds.

**KARL ÖSTMAN:  
WORKSITE NARRATIVE AND VISIONARY LITERATURE**

My first examples are drawn from Karl Östman. He remained a manual worker all his life in northern Sweden during the so-called “gold rush,” when the northern woods were exploited and enormous riches were won and gathered in a few hands. Östman attended school for three years, but at the age of eleven he started to work in the timber industry. His working experience was manifold: as a cutter or carrier of plank at the sawmills, as

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<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Furuland and Svedjedal (2006), pp. 103, 106, 179 ; Godin (1994), pp. 61, 119, 147f., 163, 167f.; Svensson (1974), pp. 79–85; Hilborn (2014), pp. 156, 313.

a lumberjack in the woods, as a stevedore at the harbors, and as a miner in the coalmines. This means that he was also a seasonal worker, moving among worksites following the availability of jobs. Under these harsh circumstances, Östman nonetheless published three short story collections and one novel, and in addition about a hundred short stories in newspapers and journals. Östman was also a diligent journalist, but he could never live on his writing. In fact, his last book—a novel with the ambiguous title *Den breda vägen* [The Broad Road]—was published as early as 1923, after which Östman seems to have had difficulties in writing, partly because of the after-effects of an accident at a worksite. Östman's first book, the short-story collection *Pilgrimer* [Pilgrims], was published in 1909; the next, *En fiol och en kvinna och andra historier* [A Fiddle and a Woman and Other Stories], in 1912, and his last short-story collection, *Hunger* [Hunger], in 1916.<sup>25</sup>

Most of Östman's writings deal with labor, work and the experience of work. The setting is mostly a worksite, and the plot evolves from problems of time and space—the high tempo of work, which augments exploitation and causes accidents, discord, and mischief; and the conflicts between stressed and oppressed workers at the worksite. This fundamental structure is paradigmatically chronotopic: the proletarian worksite is indeed a materialized dynamic time-space.<sup>26</sup> Östman's unique specialty as an author is his detailed depiction of the working-process itself: minute description of the tools and machines, how they are used, how they function, how they move, what the working operations are, and how the worker handles it all.<sup>27</sup> These descriptions constitute spatializing pauses that stop the narrative flow, but at the same time they may indirectly foretell a com-

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<sup>25</sup> For biographies in context, see Gärdegård (1976) and Wredenberg (1923/1977).

<sup>26</sup> Torell (2008) has discussed other chronotopical aspects of Östmans and the northern Swedish working-class authors—above all, their use of the city as a chronotope.

<sup>27</sup> For examples, see Agrell (2003).

ing accident, for instance by focusing on dangerous moments within the process, or by likening the machines to hungry beasts. These descriptions thus have a chronotopic function: time and space are pressed together, charged with threat.

Supported by such devices, the chronotope of the worksite also paves the way for the form-shaping ideology of the narrative: the anti-capitalist criticism that gives form to the particular plot. The elementary schemata are few—generically, they are often inventive variants of the proletarian sketch (Löfgren, 2002)—but their variations are amazingly manifold. For one thing, because there are several fundamental story-possibilities: stories about accidents, about bullying, about antagonisms toward foremen and the authorities, about firing and unemployment, and other, mostly pessimistic narratives.<sup>28</sup> In addition, these story-possibilities can be combined, and quite different sections can be inserted within each, e.g. in the form of reflections, musings, memories, and speeches. In the story “Kapar-Karlsson,” in the 1912 collection *En fiol och en kvinna och andra historier*, it is in fact the protagonist Karlsson’s worried and loving musings about his sick wife that triggers the accident that deprives him of his hand at the sawmill. Another intriguing detail is that Karlsson, at that unhappy moment, is doing the work for a young boy who needs to rest, and this act of solidarity causes his own disaster. Still more remarkably, the accident itself is not in fact depicted; where it is expected, a metaleps—a metafictional device—is inserted in its place, and the author-narrator addresses his readers, asking them how such a common and trivial event should be depicted, ironically questioning whether the depiction is worthwhile—however bloody, it may be too insignificant for literary writing.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, as the narrator is speaking at the meta-level, time passes in the fic-

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<sup>28</sup> On Östman’s pessimism, see Godin (1994), in the section entitled “Sågverksarbetare och pessimist—Karl Östman” [Sawmill Worker and Pessimist—Karl Östman].

<sup>29</sup> See Godin, 1994, p. 142f. on the tendency to meta-commentary in Östman.

tive world, the plot goes on, and the accident happens. When the narrator returns to the story, the hand is already lying in the sawdust, and the narrative ends.<sup>30</sup> This very hand transforms into a chronotopic motif, for in it, indeed—as the hand represents manual work, and work compresses time and space—“spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole. Time, as it were, *thickens*, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history.” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 122).

The fundamental chronotopic structure of Östman’s narrative also manifests in his generic recyclings and intertextual reworkings. Some of his book titles actualize a Christian repertoire—like *Pilgrimer* and *Den breda vägen* (cf. Matthew 7:13–14), and so do story-titles like “Nineve” (in *En fiol och en kvinna och andra historier*). In fact, when *Pilgrimer* was published in 1909, Östman was mistaken for a clergyman-author with the same name.<sup>31</sup> What Östman does with this repertoire is, however, not very fitting for church, even if preaching, meditation, and brotherly love are important features. The title-story “Pilgrimer” has the form of a dream vision, that is a classic Christian genre, with Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come, Delivered Under the Similitude of a Dream* (1678/2009) as its most well-known source, not least among common people in Sweden.<sup>32</sup> Bunyan’s text was not only translated into Swedish numerous times (91 editions (Esking, 1980, p. 9)), but it also became the object of a serious travesty, a transcription entitled *Brukspatron Adamsson, eller Hvar bor du?* [Country Squire Adamsson, or Where Do

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<sup>30</sup> See the comments and analyses in Agrell (2003) and Godin (1994).

<sup>31</sup> Karl Östman (1860–1926), author of works like *Bedrag icke dig själf!: predikan i Hernösands domkyrka 6:te söndagen efter trettondedagen* [Do not deceive yourself! Sermon in the church of Hernösand on the 6th Sunday after Trinity Sunday] (1905).

<sup>32</sup> For the dream-vision as a genre, see Russell (1988). For Bunyan in Sweden, see Esking (1980).

You Live?]) (1863/2003) (Lindström, 1997).<sup>33</sup> The author of this text was Paul Peter Waldenström, pastor in the Swedish Missionary Society, and the text was first published as a serial in a religious journal 1862. Since then, the book has appeared in 11 editions, the most recent in 2003. Although off-canonical, it is said to have been the most widely read book in Sweden at the beginning of the 1900s (Schück, 1904, p. 132). These Christian books certainly belong to the popular literary heritage of the working classes, and in Östman's "Pilgrimer," that repertoire is both recycled and transformed.

The narrative in "Pilgrimer" is visionary and allegorical, written in an archaizing language depicting the narrator-wanderer on his journey through an evil world. On his way, he stops at different stations, confronting miserable people and conditions, unmasking the fundamental injustice and inequality that rule the world. This is the fundamental structure of the genre, of which the opening scene is typical (Russell, 1988, pp. 5). It exhibits the author-narrator at his desk in the evening. He is in deep distress, trying to create a work that would do well for his "brothers", the workers. But he won't succeed: it is darkening outside and inside him, and he is craving for light, "Mera ljus!" [More light!] (pp. 19). "Mera ljus!" had by then become a formula of the Labour movement, referring to the importance of education, especially the ability to read, for the class struggle to succeed (Furuland & Svedjedal, 2006, pp. 34; 383; Godin, 1994, p. 68). But here in the writer's study, the formula is assigned an opposite meaning, a sense that is more Faustian: no more bookish studies; what the writer needs are empirical studies of the reality he is to depict. So he makes a break and starts wandering through the world, becoming a pilgrim on a journey to truth, learning by seeing: "Jag såg..." [I saw...] is the recurring—visionary—formula. This is a traditional frame of visionary literature according to the generic conventions, as is the fact that the whole

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<sup>33</sup> On serious travesty, see Genette, 1997, chapter 1.

journey turns out to have been a dream. The “subjective playing with time” typical of Bakhtin’s “chronotope of the miraculous world” is here conspicuous (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 155). Nevertheless, both the setting and the plot are strikingly naturalistic: the stations exhibit horrible situations with dangerous worksites, miserable homes, and destroyed workers in deep despair.<sup>34</sup> The author-pilgrim is overwhelmed by compassion and impotent rage, but he can do nothing, not even make “his brothers” listen to him. In the second part of the story, however, a voice from heaven endows him with a prophetic mission; he is elected to preach freedom for the oppressed, and this is an apocalyptic turning point of the story:<sup>35</sup> the workers decide to leave everything behind, joining the author-narrator as pilgrims, and finally they reach—not heaven but their enemy, Capitalism incarnated as an abominable allegorical figure. This is Doomsday, the Day of Retribution, enacted on the threshold of Revolution: the criminal is sentenced, but at the moment he is to be executed, the dreamer wakes up, and the story ends.

Here, again, a Christian generic chronotope is recycled in developing a proletarian plot: the dream vision transforms into apocalypse, and the apocalypse into a revolutionary moment. This device was quite common in working-class and other leftist literature,<sup>36</sup> but in Östman, there is more to observe. Östman’s combination of the traditional pilgrim motif and the proletarian setting makes use of the same chronotopic schema as described above, that is, the depiction of the worksite as a spatiotemporal unit; but here the pilgrim moves between different such units within an enclosing world. This enclosing world, in turn, is itself a spatiotemporal unit, intertwining such chronotopic motifs as the road and the wandering, the searching, the meeting, and the threshold-dialogue. These motifs, as Bakhtin

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<sup>34</sup> See Hilborn, 2014, p. 93–115 on depictions of the working-site as Hell on earth.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Russell, 1988, in the section entitled “The Apocalypse”.

<sup>36</sup> Thus, for example, in Brecht; see Agrell, 1997, p. 48–52.

(1981) has shown, are associated with archaic genres like the adventure novel; but more important here is their insertion into the traditional dream vision and the chronotope of the miraculous world. The dream vision is an answer to an epoch in crisis—to an *exigence*, we may say—and it aims to provide a critical historical synthesis of all its contradictory multiplicity. But this is to be done within a timeless narrated world where everything is simultaneous, like the visions in Dante or *Piers Plowman* (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 156f). In Östman, the critical synthesis of modern capitalism is exposed in all its historical concreteness, but this is done gradually and cumulatively, and the narrated world is not timeless. On the contrary, it is evolving a plot, and this is because of the transformation of the pilgrim motif from a searcher to a prophet with an apocalyptic mission, which is also performed. For the mission to be performed, a plot is needed, and the plot needs chronotopic motifs, mentioned above, that generate movement in space and time. This interweaving and disarranging of generic traditions diminishes the distance to the narrated world and clears a path to recognition and identification; at the same time, social awareness and critical reflection are triggered. Such pragmatic perspectives are expressions of the form-shaping ideology of the overarching chronotope that governs Östman's generic experiments: the worksite as lived narrative world. This world is the *Sitz im Leben* of his texts, and the painful experience of this world is the *exigence* that motivates his narrative as a rhetorical act.

There is, however, some interesting testimony to the fact that this exigence, and the *lived* aspect of the world of labor, were not much understood. Östman was criticized for his consistent class-perspective as well as for his pessimism, and one of the more spectacular agents of such criticism was Selma Lagerlöf. In a letter sent to Östman in 1922, after she had unsuccessfully tried to find an editor for his novel, Lagerlöf alludes to such critics and develops the same criticism herself (quoted in Gärdegård, 1976, p. 241). She is convinced, Lagerlöf says, that “the misery of the working-class” is so well-known by now that further depictions are unnecessary;

furthermore, the situation for those people is “so much better now” that such accounts of misery are hardly motivated. Those in real need nowadays are instead the middle classes, Lagerlöf maintains: middle-class people “are so poor here in Sweden that they almost enviously regard a worker’s condition and his smaller claims on life.” So she reads Östman’s work as “propaganda,” and advises him “not to think so much on serving [his] own class while writing.” And she adds: “But then perhaps you would think that you had nothing to write about.” This is the very crux of the matter: the *exigence* that motivates Östman’s writing is exactly what Lagerlöf wants him to forget. This exigence is the inventive force behind his generic experimentation, and the origin of the form-shaping ideology that his chronotopic schemata generate.

Further compelling examples of Östman’s handling of generic issues could well be given, but some space must be saved for a slightly different generic world, namely, the intriguing dialogue between the moral exemplum, the Romance, the crime story, and the carnival. My example here will be Maria Sandel, who is also known as the first female proletarian writer in Sweden.

### **MARIA SANDEL: MORAL EXEMPLUM, DEVOUT STORY, CRIME FICTION, MELODRAMA, ROMANCE, AND CARNIVAL**

Maria Sandel worked as a home-seamstress in Kungsholmen’s poorest working-quarters in Stockholm, where she lived alone with her aging mother. Because she had increasing problems with vision and hearing, Sandel never held a factory job, but she was active in the labor movement and also founded the Social-Democratic woman’s magazine, *Morgonbris* [Morning-Breeze] (1904). As a young girl, Sandel emigrated to the USA, where she worked as a maid and published her first poems; but she soon returned to Sweden and the textile industry, at which point she started writing prose fiction. During her short life, she published six books: the first, *Vid Svältgränsen* [On the Hunger Line], was a 1908 short story collection; and the last, *Mannen som reste sig* [The Man Who Rose], was a 1927 nov-

el. In between, Sandel published three novels—*Familjen Vinge och deras grannar. En bok om verkstadspojkar och fabriksflickor* [The Family Vinge: A Book About Workshop Boys And Factory Girls] (1909 and 1913), *Virveln* [The Whirl] (1913), *Droppar i folkhavet* [Drops in The Vast Crowd] (1924) —and one more short story collection, *Hexdansen* [The Witch Dance] (1919).<sup>37</sup>

Sandel's narrative world is an interweaving of class-struggle and moral issues: the dangers and humiliations of factory work, unemployment, poverty, strikes, tuberculosis, housing shortage, restrictions of space, alcoholism, wife-battering and other maltreatment, criminality, prostitution, venereal diseases, single mothers, child murder, lesbian love, and even paedophilia.<sup>38</sup> Within the Labour movement, questions of morality were high in rank on the agenda in those days, not least within the party press. They were actualized by the struggle against so-called *smutslitteratur* [dirty literature]—which was still ongoing in 1909.<sup>39</sup> The struggle concerned not only bad taste and lack of education, but also moral disorder and depravity in general. The Social Democrats were anxious to take a stand on the side of education and morals, since in bourgeois circles crudity and immorality were often associated with the working class. It was thus important to change that impression, and the effect was a far-reaching moral rearmament within the Labour movement itself. As has been made clear by earlier research, the idea of *den skötsamme arbetaren* [the conscientious worker], and the insistence on inner discipline thereby developed as a part of the class struggle itself (Horgby, 1993, p. 43f.; 67f.; 272f.; 361f.; Boëthius, 1989, p. 260f.; 262–264; 270; 276). In this double struggle, Sandel was an eager participant, and she did not hesitate to make use of the enemy's generic means. Her strong moral passion produces the typi-

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<sup>37</sup> For a biography, see Forselius (1981).

<sup>38</sup> For criminality in the working-class literature of the time see Agrell (2014a).

<sup>39</sup> For this course of events, see Boëthius, 1989, pp. 131–133, and chapter V.

cal crossing of her texts between pathetics, melodrama, and extreme naturalism.<sup>40</sup> Her moralism is given expression in contrastive and contradictory voices—a peculiarity also noted in previous research on Sandel (Forselius, 1981, p. 32; 38–40; 48; Forselius, 1983, p. 97f.; 103; Forselius, 1996, p. 147).

Thus Sandel's main generic repertoire is, on the one hand, the moral exemplum and the devout story;<sup>41</sup> and on the other hand crime fiction, melodrama, and Romance as well as carnivalistic episodes.<sup>42</sup> That is to say: Sandel blends traditional moral-didactic genres with archaic popular grotesque and current popular genres, even "dirty" ones. Because of their episodic composition, her novels manage to integrate all of these forms at once, as do many of her shorter stories. No wonder: since these genres all deal with moral issues, they can be combined without logical problems. In spite of great differences in style, tone, and outlook, they collaborate within a common chronotope, creating a common chronotopic world. Because of their episodic structure, Sandel's plots too are manifold: they develop several threads at a time, without an individual protagonist keeping them together. The texts instead are held together by the chronotopic motifs that are depicted in the disparate scenes, generating the problems at issue. Sandel's first novel, *Familjen Vinge*, was in fact published as a serial in *Social-Demokraten* in 1909 before the book version appeared in 1913. When the book version was about to be published by Bonnier's, Sandel was criticized for the pessimistic ending (depicting a pedophilic rape); but Sandel's (reluctant) changing of the order of the chapters solved that problem (Svedjedal, 1993, p. 295).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See further analysis in Agrell (2014b).

<sup>41</sup> This is emphasized, for example, in Godin, 1994, p. 135.

<sup>42</sup> The blending of genres and traditions is also pointed out in Forselius, 1983, p. 103. For carnival and carnivalistic genre strategies see Bakhtin, 1984a, pp. 181–269, and Bakhtin, 1984b, esp. pp. 7f, 11, 18–21, 24f, 33f.

<sup>43</sup> For an analysis of the change, see Agrell (2007).

Sandel's main settings are the factory, the home, the tenement, and the street. These are literary chronotopes, places evolving in time, generating ways of seeing and formative ideologies, also associated with various genres. But they are also double in character. The factory is the site of work and worker's solidarity, as well as exploitation and degradation; the home is the site of love and intimate community, as well as hatred and mischief, the site of food and rest as well as hunger and labor; and the street, finally, is the site of social community and fellowship, as well as criminality and prostitution.<sup>44</sup> Sandel's plots develop all of these possibilities, sometimes in one and the same story, and the plot may also blur or transcend these chronotopic borders, as when exploitation and criminality enters Home. Quite often several chronotopes or chronotopic motifs interact: carnival may intrude into the devout story, and the grotesque into Romance.<sup>45</sup> The crime story may interact with the deterrent exemplum, and the deterrent exemplum may also be quite ambivalent.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the deterrent exemplum may also interact with Romance, and Romance could be extended to melodrama. These generic intersections clearly demonstrate how chronotopes are not purely formal phenomena, but flexible mental constructions that take shape in the pragmatic interaction with texts (Keunen, 2000, p. 5).

This is in fact the case already with the title story in *Vid svältgränsen*, an unhappy love-story ending with a birth of an illegitimate child in a lumber-room and the mother's death. What is deterrent, of course, is the main plot, which sets forth the consequences of extramarital sex, and the overdramatic details also tend toward melodrama (see Agrell, 2014b). But the

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<sup>44</sup> See Agrell (2007) for my analysis of the genre rhetoric of Sandel's sketch "Min gata" [My street] in *Vid Svältgränsen*. Cf. the feminist analysis of the same text in Forselius (1983).

<sup>45</sup> For the tradition of Romance in this context, see Bakhtin (1981) on the adventure novel; and see Cawelti (1976) for the modern formulaic love-story kind of Romance.

<sup>46</sup> See Agrell (2011a) on the depiction of child murder in *Hexdansen*.

plot's moral complications also make the deterrent figure Agda exemplary: she gives up the man and father *in spe* to another woman with whom he already has two children. This is a moral choice, since Agda could have had him if she wanted, but she denies herself due to compassion with the other mother. Hence the narrative wavers between the deterrent and the exemplary, and thus combines two mutually exclusive edifying genres within the melodramatic Romance.<sup>47</sup> The manifold setting, moving between the home chamber, the factory, and the street, facilitates this kind of moral complexity, as conflicting details can easily be inserted. In these cases, the literary communication is not so much dependent on the narrative itself as on the chronotopic constructions associated with the text in writing and reading (Keunen, 2000, p. 5).

It is instructive to compare “Vid svältgränsen” with “Brudklädningen” [The Wedding Dress], another story in Sandel's debut collection. “Brudklädningen” is one of the very first stories Sandel published—already in *Morgonbris* (1904). This is Romance on love and marriage transformed into a virtual exercise in the genre of the Sunday-school story. The chronotopic setting is a working-class tenement, and the plot deals with the problem of getting a white wedding-dress.

The story's bride *in spe* does have a black dress for use at *funerals*—another central chronotopic motif—but she does not want to get married in such a garment, and a good part of the narrative depicts her despair at that threat. The problem is solved, however, when the proletarian neighbors, inhabitants of the house, collect money for the white dress, and everybody is happy.

For a modern reader, the story may seem to fall flat; yet there are some interesting aspects as well. For one thing, the bridegroom is not mentioned. He is totally missing in the story; the wedding dress seems to have

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<sup>47</sup> Jauss, 1974, pp. 294-296, emphasizes the ambivalence of interpreting the moral example, i.e., the problem of choosing between literal and creative applications.

taken his place as an object of love and longing. No wonder: this is a highly saturated chronotopic motif, since the wedding-dress is associated with the threshold between two central *times* in human life, at the same time as it is connected to a particular ritual *place* for initiation. Such places compress past, present, and future into one timeless and purely spatial moment. The wedding-dress incarnates all of this, and so it is of utmost importance to have one.

Perhaps still more important, however, is another aspect: the Sunday-school story is a beautiful example of the pragmatic aesthetics of working-class literature and its chronotopic world. Recall the functional occasion of the story's first publication: not in a book, but in *Morgonbris*. What is important here are *not* the story's moral complications and intellectual possibilities, but the concrete depiction of intimate solidarity that the chronotope of the house makes possible. Since the house, in this case, is a proletarian tenement, the chronotope is also associated with the form-generating ideology of class. And the form generated here is an exemplary story, showing that even the allegedly ephemeral effort of providing a factory-girl with a wedding dress may be an act of class-solidarity.<sup>48</sup> Such is the resulting world-view of the intersecting low-brow genres that make up the story.

Most profound and provoking, however, is the treatment of generic issues in Sandel's short story collection *Hexdansen*. Here a standard way of

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Fox (1994), who contends (in contrast to Sandel) that the function of Romance in female British working-class fiction of the early 1900s is to express the desire for "an individual subjectivity that is posed against an inescapable collectivity": "The romance plot comes into play not only to convey a longing for relations based in tenderness, rather than exploitation, but also to represent a utopian private arena in which one is valued for one's gendered 'self' alone" (p. 142). This is a contrast to Sandel's ideas on class-solidarity. Sandel comes nearer, however, to Fox's description of the strategies of male authors: "the instability of romance in working-class experience is in some ways made use of more openly and easily by men"; they can "legitimize romance by pressing it to serve a more strictly socialist agenda," so "romance operates in their narratives as a self-conscious tool" (p. 143).

reading is complicated both by generic transgressions and fundamental ambivalences in the narrative stance, encompassing the whole ethical (and un-ethical) scale. The stories all deal with the deepest misery of the working classes, spiritual as well as material. As in Martin Koch's *Guds vackra värld* [God's Beautiful World] (1916/1964), the gallery of characters are chosen from the unemployed or the sheer lumpenproletariat, and the petty criminals that these socially outcast positions both generate and are generated from. Here genre traditions of crime fiction are important, but so too are carnivalistic strategies, as we will see; and they enter into a dialogue with Romance and devout genres as well.

The story "Draksådden" [The Sowing of the Dragon's Teeth] provides a deterrent example with grotesque strains. The setting is at home and in the street in a working-class neighborhood. The plot involves a worn-out mother, ungrateful and demanding children, and a conceited daughter with bad teeth. The focus is on the girl's ambition to get new teeth. Since she is lazy and selfish, she forces her already worn-out and even deathly ill mother to scrub stairs for a dentist at night, with a pair of false teeth for the daughter as compensation. The same day that the daughter gets her teeth, her mother dies—with the words "Teeth! Teeth!" on her lips. Without her mother's services with housework and the like, the girl has great difficulties managing—but she has her teeth, and hopefully she will get a husband through them. Eventually, a good man does become interested in her—too good for her, the narrator assures us—but one day, when she is brushing her teeth before meeting him, she drops them into the porcelain sink, and they break in two. Since he is a good man, he forgives her for deceiving him that her teeth were genuine, and loves her without them. But when he finds out how she got them and that they cost her mother's life, he is filled with horror, and leaves the girl for good.

Moralism is very strong in this story, not least because of the narrator's explicit judgements. Also a great tragedy is inserted through the account of the poor mother's fate—in fact much more comprehensive and

eventful than indicated here (see Agrell, 2011b). Yet the main plot is strikingly comic-grotesque, or tragicomic, one might say: motherly martyrdom and false teeth. Again, such discrepancies destabilize the discourse: not that the behavior of the girl is not condemned, but the whole context is so bizarre, and the central scenes so grotesque, that the very addressivity of the text gives a good deal of untranslatable overinformation; although in the tradition of the realist novel, this narrative is hardly realism, but rather the counter-realist narrative of an anti-genre (cf. Berger, 1995, p. 26). The very motif of the teeth with its grotesque overtones is chronotopic as well, connected as it is to the space-time of the chewing mouth. The chewing mouth, in turn, is a typical carnivalistic motif, associated with the great network of offensive comic-critical carnivalistic genres (Bakhtin, 1984a, pp. 122-137; cf. Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 18.).

But Sandel can make it worse. The novel-length title story “Hexdansen” deals with the miserable fortunes of the family Nerman: the father Jon, an unemployed alcoholic, and the mother Ida, once again the worn-out housewife, cleaning woman, and servant of her ungrateful and lazy family. The five surviving children step into their careers, respectively, as a thief, a pimp, a prostitute, a suicide, and an infanticide. As a family, they are held together only out of necessity, not of love or sympathy, and the ethics of class-solidarity is totally missing.

One of the ambivalences of this story concerns the carnivalesque traits already commented on in earlier research (Berger, 1995). But in “Hexdansen” the carnivalesque comes into being not only as distinctive traits but also as a chronotope generating a whole world of turning upside down—this provocatively disordering quality makes Morson and Emerson call carnival an “antichronotope (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 87; 228; 440). Already the first chapter of “Hexdansen,” which presenting the Nerman family as “weeds” and depraved throughout, also hints at opposite possibilities. Some of these possibilities concern the father, Jon Nerman: not only his inherited respect for work, but also his secret love for his first

daughter Gerda, now dead. Yet father Nerman hangs on to her memory, visiting her grave in secret. This secrecy is an important detail: his irrational love for the dead Gerda is his weak point—apparently his only point of human vulnerability. Yet this microscopic human strain turns out to be decisive in the future.

In the last chapter, entitled “Fader Nerman finner sin överman” [Father Nerman Finds His Superior], Jon Nerman’s hidden desire for something like love or human community takes over—in the figure of a woman. But this is no Romance; on the contrary, the narrative is constructed as a *parody* of a conventional Romance. By then the whole Nerman family is dissolved: the mother Ida is dead, and the surviving children are more or less criminalized. Father Nerman is alone, left with himself in the streets—no home, no job, no money, no food. His only chance is charity, and so he tries the Salvation Army, the both physical and spiritual chronotope that drives the last part of the plot. The price to be paid there, however, is confession and conversion, and father Nerman is quite short of that currency. Then he runs into a woman Salvationist, who turns out to be his former mistress, Milda. She is now old and ugly: her nose red and blue, trying to creep into her mouth, the narrator tells us (p. 161)—but Father Nerman is not fastidious, and expects a revival of good old days. But *she* is converted, indeed, with all her body and soul, so she accepts his advances only on the condition that he confess, convert, marry her, and go to work at her mangle shop. Since he sees no better alternative, he accepts, hoping to escape this trap once they are married. But there is no way out: his new woman is just as principled as a Salvationist, housewife, and employer as she is excellent at cooking and ardent in bed. Finally, the desperate Nerman tries to hang himself in his wife’s apron-bands. Unfortunately, he fails, and, in the very moment of his falling down, his wife finds him in the kneeling position of a prayer. Misunderstanding the situation, she gives praise to the Lord for his apparent conversion (pp. 179), and Nerman pas-

sively yields to this role. And this is where parody transforms into carnival.

Nerman the brute is now disciplined; passively he accepts his lot as an obedient husband, diligent worker and pious Salvationist. Yet he feels like he is in hell, especially since Milda has forced him to exchange his dirty shirts for clean ones regularly (pp. 198). What is more, Nerman seems to lose his contact with the real world: he is going nuts. Participating in the Christian sewing circle that his wife has arranged—his task is to carry the coffee tray and “draga ur tråckeltrådar och sprätta sönder gammalt, som skulle sys om” [pull the tacking thread out and unpick old clothes that need remaking] (p. 184)—he suddenly disappears from the room. When he returns, he is entirely naked, except for jackboots and some leaves from a potted plant covering his physical manliness. He carries a chamber pot, and posing it on the floor he starts singing a well-known spiritual song, “The Well,” while at the same time performing the act described in the song: “Here a well is flowing, / blessed is he who finds it” (pp. 186).

The scene is typically carnivalesque—turning upside down by transforming alleged high spirituality into bodily flesh in its ‘lowest’ function (Bakhtin, 1984a, pp. 122f., 126f.; Bakhtin, 1984b, pp. 11, 18-21.). Yet this is no protest demonstration on Nerman’s part. He is described as serious and chaste, and the scandal is entirely on the part of the ladies—in fact, it is their own creation.

After this incident, Nerman is sent to the asylum—for Milda certainly had made him saved and consecrated, but at the price of his senses (pp. 186). Yet he is said to recover, and the story ends with the loving Milda eagerly preparing mangle and prayers for his return. But from Nerman’s own point of view, this will be a return to hell: “Så att när pappa Nerman stackare kommer hem från hospitalet, skall han finna sin föreställning om helvetet i en hemsk och ofrånkomlig verklighet, som väntar honom med tallösa kval,” the narrator reflects. [So when poor father Nerman returns home from the hospital, he will find his conception of hell incarnated in a

horrible and inescapable reality, waiting him with numberless torments.] (p. 187).

These are the last words of the narrative. But how is this ending to be interpreted? Clearly, this is no happy end for Nerman. But what about Milda? She is certainly happy with her disciplined former brute, but this is only because of a misunderstanding. She misinterprets his submissive attitude for conversion, and she *cannot imagine* that the steady way of living that makes her (and would make most steady citizens) happy will give him “tallösa kval” [numberless torments]. And since the reader repeatedly has been forced into identification with Nerman from within, it is not self-evident how this prolepsis about his future torments should be taken. In other words, with regard to the moral problematic of the story, the narrative here opposes a closure. The carnivalesque processing of the text, the mixture of high and low, of tragic and comic strains, preserves an ethical ambivalence—just as much as does the narrator’s hovering between moralizing and identification.<sup>49</sup> What these techniques have in common is dissolving the narrative order of the discourse and frustrating generic expectations. The carnivalesque (anti-)chronotope thus prepares for a problematic reading: meditative and reflexive, indeed (cf. Berger, 1995, p. 26; Forselius, 1981, p. 40).

## CONCLUSION AND FURTHER REFLECTIONS

These examples should suffice to show the special blending of generic traditions that gave birth to the earliest Swedish working-class fiction. Its lowbrow origin, as we have seen, did not forestall rather sophisticated literary constructions; yet the intended function was not aesthetic but pragmatic, designed to contribute to the struggle for decent conditions and democratic political influence for the working classes. Interestingly, how-

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<sup>49</sup> Forselius (1996) describes this narrative ambivalence as an imperfection: that Sandel never succeeded in creating an authoritative narrative voice (p. 147).

ever, what we apprehend as the specifically literary dimension of these constructions—their generic experimentation—was also what could make the texts politically effective for an individual reader. This is because of the thought-provoking readings that these chronotopic constructions were apt to trigger—and of the generic competence of reflective reading, which was inherited from the tradition of devout genres and Christian revivalist literature. Even if the intended readers did not always use or develop that competence—a fact that Karl Östman alludes to in “Kapar-Karlsson,” as we have seen—the text’s generic strategies and addressivity pave the way for such readings.

A final question that I can only touch upon is what happened to this first proletarian literary tradition in the course of literary history. By the 1930s, the “Golden Age” of Swedish working-class literature, few visible traces of this tradition seem to have remained. Instead of generic mixture and crossing of traditions, canonically “pure” genres and styles were used. The main proletarian genre by then had turned out to be the *Bildungsroman*, that is, the story of an individual life, and in this case often the story of an author in progress; and the aesthetic ambitions of such texts are evident. This is a great difference, since, as we know, individual and aesthetic perspectives were not common among the class-conscious early working-class authors.<sup>50</sup> Already in the 1920s, however, some working-class authors repudiated the label of *proletärförfattare* [proletarian writer], maintaining that their outlook was not limited to class, but was universal and artistic (Furuland & Svedjedal, 2006, chapter 16). The Golden Age certainly produced a large number of highly artistic proletarian texts—that is why it was “Golden”—but most of these were rather different from those dis-

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<sup>50</sup> Nilsson, 2014, p. 27–29, points to the emerging “folk home” as one possible cause of the declining proletarian class-consciousness, i.e. the welfare state and the corporatist idea of cooperation between classes and even the vanishing of classes.

cussed above. This has several causes. The continuing secularization and democratization of the Parnassus diminished the need to appeal to the Christian and popular heritage; and by then, working-class authors were also inspired by modernist aesthetics and ideas of textual autonomy.<sup>51</sup> This eventually generated great results indeed; and in 1974, two of these authors were even awarded The Nobel Prize for Literature, namely, Harry Martinson and Eyvind Johnson. The working-class fiction of today is strikingly manifold, including both new kinds of wage earners and new ethnicities. Class-consciousness, pragmatic strategies, and strong addressivity are important features (Nilsson, 2010; 2014), but the repertoire is very different from that of the early working-class authors. Karl Östman, Maria Sandel and their contemporary colleagues are not to be compared with them. They are a variety apart, and yet nonetheless representative of the principles of multigeneric experimentation.

This literary-historical development bears specific genre-theoretical implications. In the process, a kind of literature-in-the-making emerges, and this coming into being represents neither literature nor genre but a *potential* for literary creations and generic experimentation. This is why this early working-class fiction moves so freely within its limited repertoire. In fact, this is also part of what the very word *genre* means: genericity as potentiality, possibility and dynamic movement. As soon as a genre is considered fully developed and complete, it is not only closed but even dead. Yet even then, it can always be resurrected for new uses in new contexts. As Bakhtin explains:

Always preserved in a genre are undying elements of the archaic. ... A genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new sim-

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<sup>51</sup> See Nilsson (2003), concerning Ivar Lo-Johansson. Nilsson shows, however, that Lo-Johansson tried to combine modernist experimentation with a proletarian class-perspective and a pragmatic function.

ultaneously. Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre. ... Therefore, even the archaic elements preserved in a genre are not dead but eternally alive; that is, archaic elements are capable of renewing themselves. A genre lives in the present, but always remembers its past, its beginning. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 106)

It is to this generic character that the concept of the chronotope corresponds. The manifold chronotopic senses presented in previous research and actualized in this article, after all, seem to run together in one fundamental principle of logical rather than literary character: the chronotope is the interactive unity of time and space that makes human life, thought, communication, and action practically possible. It means that time takes place in space, and space exists in time. Without this constructed unit of time and space, the world would not be understandable; it would not be *our* world. In this way, the chronotope represents a fundamental human *logic*, corresponding to a dynamic cognitive schema that precedes and conditions all experience in a somewhat Kantian way (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 367; Bruhn, 2005, pp. 149).

The textual analyses above have demonstrated how this chronotopic logic brings together literary and anthropological perspectives. Likewise, we have seen how the same logic guides both textual genres and human action, both in this world and in fiction. The analyzed texts use and re-use a large spectrum of non-canonical genres, thereby mixing narrative, meditative and agitational chronotopes, that is, genres with different spatio-temporal structures. This mixture prepares for certain kinds of rhetorical acts, addressing readers with special knowledge and needs, and emerging from a special exigence.

As a *literary* concept, as we have seen, the chronotope is the concrete reciprocity of time and space that prevails within a text and makes it unique, as well as pertinent to a genre. In this sense, a narrative chronotope generates a *plot*, a temporal chain of events, enacted in space. By spatially

localizing the temporal flow, the chronotope makes a narrative *world* emerge, as lucid as a graphic image, simultaneously as a temporal plot and a mental (reading) process. The chronotope also generates (form-shaping) ideologies that give structure and meaning to a narrative world.

The chronotope—or chronotopic logic—also has other dimensions beyond the textual-literary ones. As we have seen, the narrative world is not only a textual phenomenon, but also a mental, cognitive, and phenomenological construction. Since the plot involves human action, and the reception of the text demands a mental effort, the chronotope also has *anthropological* aspects—existential, religious, ethical, epistemic, political, and ideological (Bemong, Borghart, Dobbeleer et al., 2010, p. iv). These aspects pertain not only to the text, but to author, reader, and context as well. In this way, the chronotope brings together all participants of the literary situation into a kind of higher unit: the complex rhetorical action of a *genre*.

Each genre has its own chronotope, its own spatio-temporal presuppositions and outlook. That does not limit the range of variations and generic mixtures that may experimentally widen or change these presuppositions. Such experimentation vivifies the genre and its chronotopic synergies, as we have seen in Bakhtin. That established genres—like crime, romance, the devout story, the allegorical-didactic novel, and so on—are chronotopically structured means that they maintain their identity as specific genres even as they are open to experimentation and change. This focus on the relative flexibility of generic structure and outlook is one of the benefits of the concept of the chronotope.

In sum, the concept of the chronotope is of great use for analysis of the comprehensive interplay between text, genre, action, and human consciousness (Bemong et al., 2010, p. iv). This chronotopic interweaving of literary and anthropological perspectives widens and deepens the scope of genre analysis beyond the formal text. That touch of reality is what the chronotopic logic ultimately affords.

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# **NOTES ON AUTHORS**

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# RESEARCH GROUP FOR GENRE STUDIES (RGGS)



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RGGS embraces the highly developed research in current Genre Studies. At the core of this research is the advanced, remarkably cohesive, and extensive body of knowledge established in Rhetorical Genre Studies, in English for Specific Purposes, and in Systemic Functional Linguistics. The field now spans important work within Rhetoric, Composition, Linguistics, Sociology, Ethnography, Business Communication, Composition and Information Studies.

RGGS seeks to develop and expand this research by examining and challenging its theoretical underpinnings, by expanding its scholarly reach, and by reintegrating a number of subjects into Genre Studies that have been left behind in the development of current Genre Studies. Specifically, RGGS strives to establish a cohesive connection between aesthetic and functional theories of genre, in order to **reinvigorate** the study of genre in aesthetic research fields, and the inclusion of aesthetic subjects in Genre Studies.