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GEORG BRANDES AND 19TH CENTURY SCANDINAVIAN REALISM

In considering the history of the European North-West, it is sometimes useful to refer to all 5 Nordic countries under one name – as Scandinavia, or, to use the local name, as Norden. However, we should keep in mind that these countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden – are different racially, linguistically, economically, and that the bourgeois society which we associate with 19th century European realism developed differently in the five countries. Today there is the Nordic Council, a kind of inter-Scandinavian parliament with representatives from the five countries. There is a common labor market, passports are not needed for Scandinavians traveling from one country to another, and there is a variety of inter-Scandinavian projects, most easily carried out in the cultural sector, though not always effectively. Readers in one of the countries, for instance, do not show much interest for books from another. Lars Gustafsson, a prominent Swedish critic and author, told me recently that he did not know Norwegian literature after Ibsen, and even if I subtract a degree of playful exaggeration, there remains an arrogance that is, alas, symptomatic: Stockholm bookstores, for instance, are often accused of not carrying Norwegian books. Hence it is possible to say that, despite many well-meant cultural efforts since the establishment of the Nordic Council (1952) – translation projects, author's seminars, etc. – the Scandinavian countries are in several ways as far apart as they were after the Napoleonic wars (which saw the last armed conflict between two Scandinavian countries).

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Let me remind you of the confusing political situation in Scandinavia around 1820. Iceland according to the Treaty of Kiel remained a part of Denmark. Finland, formerly united with Sweden for some 500 years, was now a Grand Duchy under Russia, while Norway, for more than 400 years united with Denmark, was alligned in a so-called personal union with Sweden under the crown of Bernadotte, Napoleon's former maréchal. However, although Finland was now part of Russia, its main cultural ties were still with Sweden and the Swedish language. And in Norway, long after the dissolution of the union with Denmark, writers remained faithful to the Danish tradition. As late as the last decade of the century, Norway's internationally known writers – such as Ibsen or Hamsun – wrote in Danish and had their books published in Copenhagen. Hence, even though Norway was politically under the rich and powerful Sweden, it was culturally a part of Denmark, and Denmark and Norway combined had a book-reading public no less important than that of Sweden. Indeed, as the century developed, Copenhagen, for a period of time – from 1870 till the turn of the century – was the cultural capital of all Scandinavia. This is the time – and the only time – when, culturally speaking, Scandinavia was as if one nation, known and influential in the world, and counting among its writers some of the champions of late 19th century European realism.

I will begin my discussion with this better-known stage in the development of realism in Scandinavia – the unique flowering of its literature during the period 1870–90. Following that I would like to trace some of the important, but internationally less well known, Scandinavian roots of this realism, and finally I hope to point out some of its effects on the European scene.

One hundred years ago the leading name in Scandinavian realism was that of Georg Brandes, Denmark's great literary critic, whose name has since disappeared from most handbooks, while many of the writers whom he led into battle against an outdated idealism have won lasting international reputation. Brandes' works were translated into many foreign languages, though

now they are not easily available in English translation and rarely read. While his admired antagonist Søren Kierkegaard has been a rising star, Brandes has been correspondingly on the wane, and one can see why: he was not a truly original thinker, rather he was a fine literary critic and, as a journalist, a stimulating purveyor of new ideas. But he will be for all time associated with the victory of realism in Scandinavia and the following golden age in Scandinavian literature.

He was the son of a Jewish businessman in Copenhagen. His Jewish background is important, since, even in liberal Denmark, he was made to feel, for instance in the case of university advancement, his un-Danishness, and he identified with the subjectivism and sense of personal isolation in Kierkegaard's writings, indeed, he transferred Kierkegaard's religious aggression to the secular field. Admiring friends tried to win him over to conventional Christianity, but being free – in life and outlook – was essential to Georg Brandes. Hence he never became a fully-fledged materialist, rather a regular Hegelian, though with Hegel's Absolute Spirit replaced by the idea of Freedom. In Scandinavia, where philosophy was still the handmaiden of theology, Brandes' emancipation began when he studied the early European Bible critics, Strauss and Feuerbach, and his first book, a study of dualism in Danish philosophy, shows him shedding the shackles of metaphysics. His aesthetics, on the other hand, was still conventional. Steeped in the poetry of early Danish romanticism, he looked upon Biedermeier Denmark as a leader in European literature and even found some of the late romantic works in Scandinavia (Paludan Müller, early Ibsen) to be too socially engagé. His criticism from the late 1860s shows a "vivid intelligence, an insatiable curiosity, and a unique aesthetic flair which was never subjugated to his ideological commitments" (Elbek, 161). Actually, this critical attitude stayed with him throughout his life and he could later rightly claim that he, the archenemy of romanticism, was himself a romantic (Nolin, 64). Very soon after his first visit abroad, when he came under the influence of English and French positivism, he came to realize that Den-

mark was, as he claimed, 50 years behind Europe. Moved by his liaison with a married woman, he began questioning the holiness of matrimony, and translated John Stuart Mill's *On the Subjection of women* into Danish. Taine's *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* was another inspiration. He came to see literature partly as a product of race and society, partly – and here inspired by the work of Sainte Beuve – as an extension of the individual writer's psychology. In 1870 he wrote his Ph. D. dissertation on the French aesthetic theory of his day and in his own journalism developed the historical–biographical method which was to rule Scandinavian literary criticism for decades.

Brandes spent the year 1870–71 abroad and had personal meetings with Taine, Renan, Stuart Mill, and Henrik Ibsen. After his return he began, in November of 1871, a lecture series entitled "Main Currents of European Literature", which continued with interruptions until 1887 and resulted in a work of six volumes published between 1872 and 1890. It could well be called the Bible of Scandinavian realism and moved even a sceptic like Ibsen, who wrote to Brandes:

> I have read your lectures. No more dangerous book could fall into the hands of a pregnant writer. It is one of those works that place a yawning gulf between yesterday and today. After I had been to Italy I could not understand how I had been able to exist before I had been there. In twenty years one will not be able to comprehend how a spiritual existence was possible at home before these lectures (Ibsen, *Letters*, 122).

In his introduction to volume 1, Georg Brandes outlined his plan for the whole lecture series, in which he hoped to present what he called a rudimentary psychology of early 19th century Europe. Human development had reached a high point in the revolutionary currents of the late 18th century, in the noble ideas of freedom embodied in such works as Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* and Schiller's *Don Carlos*. Brandes intended to show, first the reaction to these ideas, then the overcoming of that reaction, and his presentation would take the form of a six-act drama. Act 1 would present Rousseau and the French emigrant writers

in whom the revolutionary ideas were still active. Act 2 would deal with the self-absorbed German romantic writers, and Act 3 with the victorious reaction in France. In Act 4 – on the romantic school in England – the drama would enter its péripétie, with Byron as a central character – Byron being one of many intellectual freedom fighters with whom Brandes identified. The new positive direction of the drama would continue in its 5th act, about the romantic school in France, centering on Victor Hugo and describing a number of writers whom we would now call early realists, from Balzac to George Sand and Mérimée. Finally in Act 6, on Junges Deutschland, Brandes saw a return to 18th century ideas of freedom in the political and literary revolutions nurtured by such poets as Heinrich Heine.

That Brandes' six-act play was scheduled to end happily was of little comfort to his Danish listeners, who were told that their literature was 40 years behind times, actually that their literature was dead. "In our day and age," Brandes claimed, "a literature shows its life force by debating problems" (Brandes, *Main Currents*, 17) – a definition repeated endlessly by young Scandinavian critics and writers. Brandes gave examples of such debates abroad – George Sand's discussion of the relationship between sexes, Feuerbach's discussion of religion and John Stuart Mill's of property, or Turgenev's, Spielhagen's and Augier's treatment of social issues. Typically, during a dead period of a national literature – so Brandes claimed – whatever existed of poetry, would cry out for a strong will, as in Ibsen's play *Brand*, which, if its ideals had been generally realized, would make half humanity starve to death. The poets might also lose themselves in dreams of the past, as in the poetry of the Dane Oehlenschläger or the historical novels of his countryman Ingemann, neither of which mirrored the times in which it was created. Brandes also seemed to know *why* Danish literature was dead: the reason was that its authors were either civil servants or else ministers of the church, and their protagonists were either abstractly idealized or – by the satiric temperament – abstractly caricatured. This literature showed no concern whatever

for political problems. Brandes admitted that political freedom had nevertheless come to Denmark in the form of the 1849 constitution. More was needed, though. He ended his introduction with the following words: "It is not so much external laws that have to be altered – though they, too, need change – as it is the whole way of viewing society. This field the young generation needs to completely clear and plow up before a new literature can grow. The main task will be, through a variety of channels, to lead in those currents that spring from the revolution and its ideas of progress, and to stop reaction in all those areas where its mission is historically ended" (Brandes, *Main Currents*, 31).

Brandes' ideas do not seem particularly revolutionary to us today, his models of the new realism also seem curiously quaint for 1872 – George Sand, for example, was not likely to inspire young Scandinavians to write in a new style. Nevertheless, Ibsen looked upon Brandes as a leader of a new army: "remember that the men you are leading into the fire are only recruits. The first time they will retreat; the second time they will hold their ground; and after that they will follow you into the attack and to victory" (Ibsen, *Letters*, 121). Brandes himself must have thought along similar lines. When some ten years later he published a collection of articles which he called Men of the Modern Breakthrough (*Det moderne Genembruds Mænd*, 1883; translated as *Eminent Authors of the Nineteenth Century*), and which contained portraits of such writers as Jacobsen, Bjørnson, Ibsen, a.o., he must have thought of a breakthrough masterminded by himself. Brandes and Ibsen lived at a time when more emphasis was put on the importance of single men in history. Now we tend rather to investigate the radical changes that took place in Scandinavian society, the development of industry and capitalism and the social unrest that followed. Socialism was first imported to Scandinavia around 1850 and a permanent social-democratic party was founded in Denmark in 1871, in Norway in 1887, and in Sweden 1889. In depicting these radical changes in society, literature followed in the footsteps of painting. The Düsseldorf school of romantic studio art was

followed by plein-air painting already in the 1850s, social problems appeared in the 1870s, while in the 1880s the darkest aspects of urban life – poverty, prostitution, tuberculosis and venereal disease – filled the canvases. But even emphasizing this general *Zeitgeist*, it is difficult to overlook the extraordinary importance of Brandes for young writers, an importance resulting in the first place from his lectures, and later consolidated through his reviews of significant European and Scandinavian literature in periodicals and the daily press and through his correspondence with all the great Scandinavian writers of his day. In the following I want to use the example of Ibsen, Bjørnson, Strindberg and some others in their relationship to Brandes, in order to illuminate the so-called modern breakthrough.

Ibsen began corresponding with Georg Brandes already in 1866, after his play *Brand* had appeared. The play had been praised by Denmark's older critic Clemens Petersen and criticised by Brandes, whom Ibsen rightly felt to be a man of the future, even though he seemed to have misunderstood Ibsen's play by reading into it certain religious attitudes, which Ibsen claimed he had not intended. Three years later Ibsen sent him his new comedy, *The League of Youth*, which he felt Brandes might like because of its realistic form – it is a play about election politics, written in excellent everyday prose, though with an intricate plot in the style of Scribe. In one scene, a young woman, Selma Bratsberg, on hearing that her husband, Eric, is bankrupt and being told that now he and she will have to share everything, erupts: "How I've longed for even a little share in your worries! But when I asked, all you did was laugh it off with a joke. You dressed me up like a doll. You played with me as you might play with a child. Oh, how joyfully I could have helped to bear the burdens! How earnestly I longed for some part in the storms and thrills and excitements of life! Now I am good enough. Now . . . when Eric has nothing else. But I don't want to be the one people turn to last. Now I don't want any of your troubles. I'm leaving you" (*Oxford Ibsen*, 93). In his review of the play Brandes had been unhappy with its politically conser-

vative tone. He pointed out, though, that the scene with Selma Bratsberg contained the nucleus of a new and different drama. When the two men first met face to face, Ibsen told Brandes "You stir up the Danes and I stir up the Norwegians." Ibsen, however, did not proceed to write the drama Brandes had indicated, rather he lost himself in a fruitless study of German idealism, as we we can see from his unplayable 10-act drama, *Emperor and Galilean.* Brandes visited him in Dresden in 1874 and was depressed to see how unproductive and isolated the dramatist then seemed. It was actually Bjørnson who first introduced realism to Scandinavian drama by publishing, in 1875, two plays, in which capitalism and social unrest are used for the first time as central themes. Ibsen, as on earlier occasions, was inspired to emulate Bjørnson's success. He moved from peaceful Dresden to the politically more active city of Munich, and two years later produced his first realistic drama, *Pillars of Society*, where he displayed his true political coloring by exposing the capitalist interests, but where he is also more directly involved on the side of women's emancipation. Ibsen had not shown much understanding for Brandes' translation of Mill's book on the subjection of women. Now, in the Scandinavian club in Rome, he demonstrated an unusual degree of eagerness on behalf of women, wishing to give the position of librarian to a woman and demanding voting rights for women in the club. On being voted down, he left the society in anger. At this time, 8 years after Brandes' first encouragement, he took up the idea of a woman seeing herself as a dressed-up doll and deciding to leave her husband. *A Doll's House* was Ibsen's first international success, however, the Brandes-line, if it could be called thus, continued in his next play, *Ghosts*, in which he illustrated what would have happened if Nora had not left. Women of Goethe's Gretchen type had always been central in Ibsen's work. However, his new formula, as we read it in the notes for *Ghosts*, is certainly in the spirit of Brandes: "These women of the modern age, mistreated as daughters, as sisters, as wives, not educated in accordance with their talents, debarred from following their

mission, deprived of their inheritance, embittered in mind – these are the ones who supply the mothers for the new generation. What will be the result?" (*Oxford Ibsen*, V, 468)

Ibsen's change from the idealism of *Brand* over the realism of *Pillars of Society* to the naturalism of *Ghosts* is typical of the progression characterizing most of the soldiers in Georg Brandes' vanguard. Under the influence of a modern *Zeitgeist*, in most cases imported from abroad by Georg Brandes, these soldiers learned to leave behind them old ideas and prejudices and adopt the ideology of the modern breakthrough. As Ibsen in his play *The Wild Duck* discarded the idealism that had once inspired *Brand*, so Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson in his play *Beyond Our Power* rejected the Christian faith that had permeated most of his writings ever since his early peasant tales. More than ten years after his younger colleague Brandes, Bjørnson underwent a religious crisis by studying European and American Bible critics. Though he rejected the Biblical miracles, Bjørnson's faith remained with him in the form of a secular humanism, and this and other aspects of his somewhat naive optimism, as we shall see later, made him a soldier operating on his own fronts rather than under the banner of Brandes.

Jonas Lie, only one year younger than his friend Bjørnson, was a late arrival on Norway's literary scene. His first novel from 1869, in which he introduced the fantastic lands and equally fantastic people of North Norway, had more in common with the earlier romantic period than with the new realism. In the 1870s, however, he wrote a number of novels depicting contemporary life at sea, some of them discussing, Bjørnson-like, the problem of communication between marriage partners, and this became a central theme in several fully developed realistic novels from the 1880s, as in his masterpiece, *The Family at Gilje* from 1883. More concerned with accurate reproduction of reality in the manner of Balzac than with propaganda, Jonas Lie was moderate in his use of social messages and instead developed a style of great sophistication, which in turn inspired other realistic writers like Herman Bang in Denmark and Arne

Garborg in Norway, also, in the 20th century, such neo-realists as Sigrid Undset.

The great Danish novelist Jens Peter Jacobsen, 15 years younger than Jonas Lie, resembled his older Norwegian colleague in his careful use of the language, a language that in its studied richness may sometimes strike a realist as being more an end in itself than a means to reproduce reality. Also, with his fascination with the psychopathology of dreamers, Jacobsen showed stronger ties with earlier traditions in Danish literature. Nevertheless, after his remarkable historical novel *Marie Grubbe* from 1876 – in which he admits a certain indebtedness to Mérimée – Jacobsen in his next novel, *Niels Lyhne*, added the modern and highly controversial theme of atheism. But even though Jacobsen's attitude to atheism is genuine – he was a student of Feuerbach and the first Scandinavian translator of Charles Darwin – in the novel the idea seems dissipated by the more typical Jacobsen theme of fantasizing. And Brandes, who in his lectures had rejected the ingenious dreamer in favor of the ingenious worker, felt that Jacobsen's attack on the church was half-hearted and ineffective. Nevertheless, he included him three years later, with Ibsen and Bjørnson, in his book *Eminent Authors of the Nineteenth Century*, and rightly so: later generations, less concerned with forceful social messages, have viewed Jacobsen as one of the greatest among psychological realists in Scandinavia.

A true disciple of George Brandes, on the other hand, was the Norwegian social realist Alexander Kielland. Only two years younger than his master, he was, like Brandes, the son of a wealthy merchant and brought up with more than a touch of style and internationalism. After sending Brandes his first book, a slim volume of short stories written in a satirical style, Brandes wrote back, telling the young writer to study the method of Turgenev, mixing the ironic mode with hope, however distant, for a better society. He wrote: "Your book is rich in ridicule. But your ridicule is used to shoot sparrows. You should shoot beasts of prey. Hardly anywhere in your little book

does one feel the presence of the positive forces in your society. You should show those forces to us. You have a great advantage over your country's most famous men, Bjørnson and Ibsen. You can be more outspoken, more radical, more uncharitable, you belong to a younger generation, you haven't been as thoroughly immersed in that milksop idealism and romanticism, although in your youth you may have had to drink many a sup from those brackish waters. Now, show them that a new generation has arrived. The two old ones are now working hard to free themselves from the past; show them that you are ahead of them" (Brandes, *Brevveksling*, IV, 256). Kielland's talent was particularly suited for the kind of literature Brandes seemed to demand. While other writers, including even Bjørnson and Ibsen were later able to change their writing in the direction of a more symbolic style, Kielland throughout his brief literary career remained true to his utilitarian realism, publishing novels about social conflict, repressive religion, prostitution, and outmoded educational policies, all written with humor and elegance, though most of them without sophistication. Typical is Kielland's statement in a letter to Brandes about Jonas Lie's novel *The Family at Gilje*: "it is good, but so insignificant; if only he had had the courage to show how his dull gluttonous state officials are the fathers of today's civil servants, it could have been a real book. Now it is a pretty novel about nothing" (Brandes, *Brevveksling*, IV, 354).

I have mentioned two themes often associated with Scandinavian realism – the position of women in society and the replacement of traditional religion by some form of secular humanism. Closely associated with these themes is a third – the sexual relationship between men and women. What enraged the early readers of Ibsen's *Ghosts* was not the play's argument for women's education but its attack upon conventional Victorian morality. Brandes could rightly call *Ghosts* Ibsen's noblest act and in this he was, strangely enough, supported by Bjørnson. However, two years later Bjørnson got himself involved in a pan-Scandinavian polemic, when in his play *The Gauntlet* (1883), he

countered the prevailing double standards in sexual morality by demanding that not only women, but also men should stay away from pre-marital sex. In what is sometimes jokingly referred to as The Great Nordic War about sexual morality, Bjørnson gained the support of various women's organizations but he lost the friendship of Brandes, and he was smiled at and ridiculed by many members of the younger generation. Two writers who disagreed about Bjørnson's *Gauntlet* morality were Amalies Skram and Arne Garborg. She is both the most remarkable of nineteenth century women in Norwegian literature and its most consistent naturalist, but though she lived in Denmark and received important impressions from the artists around Brandes, she was closer to Bjørnson. Amalie Skram, twice married, noted for her great beauty and her frigidity, knew what she could expect from sensous men and described it with humorless honesty in several of her novels.

Arne Garborg, the greatest name in the literature of *nynorsk*, which is Norway's second language, went against Bjørnson in the *Gauntlet* debate and in a humorous short story much praised by Brandes reversed the normal sex roles. *She*, a charming, healthy tomboy of a girl, enjoys her illicit sex, with no guilty conscience and no fear of gossip. But *he* wants both the fun and the bad conscience. Garborg's title – "Youth" – does not only fit the characters in the story, but its author as well: he belonged to the young iconoclasts, who looked on Kielland even as an old-fashioned moralist. On reading Garborg's story, Brandes noted, "it was as if you met Guy de Maupassant himself somewhere in the Norwegian mountains and were addressed by him in *nynorsk*" (Brandes, *Essays. Fremmede Personligheder* 93).

The most reckless of them all, and also the most gifted, was August Strindberg, whose early career had been inspired by Ibsen's idealism and Swedish nationalism. For various reasons, mostly political, Sweden had been slow in accepting the new currents from abroad. However, in 1879, only two years after Ibsen wrote his first realistic play, Strindberg published his

irreverent and humorous novel, *The Red Room,* in which he describes old-fashioned honesty in conflict with the new rags-to-riches capitalism, a very timely picture of the social unrest that took its beginning that same year with the great strike at Sundsvall. As a literary politician Strindberg can best be described as a maverick. He seemed at first an enlightened supporter of women's emancipation, though he treated Ibsen's *Doll's House* with goodhumored irony. However, after the blasphemy suit following the publication of his short story collection *Married,* he showed his typically Strindbergian misogyny. As a novelist, he developed the view that an objective rendering of reality could only take place within the autobiography, since a person only knows himself thoroughly, but when he illustrated his theories in his own life story, *Son of a Servant,* the view was no less subjective than we expect from the genre and from an independent spirit like Strindberg. At the time of his two great naturalistic plays, *The Father* and *Miss Julie* – the latter supplied with an excellent introduction on naturalism – he was already on the way to a new stage in his career: the cultivation of the *Übermensch,* and it is ironic that he and Brandes should first find each other in their new admiration for Nietzsche, Brandes having by this time turned his back on utilitarianism in literature. But again, and unlike Bjørnson and Ibsen, Strindberg moved beyond this new neo-romantic trend in Scandinavian literature to become one of the founders of 20th century expressionistic drama. Even so, at the end of his life, having lived through a variety of opposing stages, he must have felt that he had been throughout most of his career some kind of realist. A realist at least in the sense that whatever he had presented – the pathology of a married life or the dark border areas, where fantasy and reality merge – was something he had lived through and accurately recorded. He was also a realist in his use of language. Ibsen had left poetry behind in order to explore what he called the much greater art of everyday prose. Strindberg went further and, under the influence of modern newspaper style, perfected "a new shorthand of dialogue, terse, nervous and

fragmentary" (Meyer, *Strindberg*, 580). Strindberg was the most versatile of Scandinavian writers, his sympathies and antipathies defy all attempts to systematize. On the one hand he despised what he called "Kleinkunst and miniature realism" (Strindberg, 100), on the other hand he always admired Zola. "Émile Zola," he wrote, "was the poet of his own terrible generation, because he described its material and spiritual life exactly the way it was. Times were cynical and so was poetry. This poet, though, was not cynical. His sense of beauty and his unusual gift of language elevated the most lowly to the level of art" (Strindberg, 81). These are words that could be applied with equal justification to Strindberg.

Considering the remarkable success of Brandes' call to arms, it is reasonable to assume that, by the time Brandes appeared, the ground had already been somewhat prepared in the northern countries for the radical changes that followed, so that each nation would be able to point to writers who had, singly or collectively, been the precursors of the great Scandinavian realists, or, rather, naturalists (see end note).

I want to suggest some names, even names of people, whose background in mystical religion would normally place them firmly within the ranks of conventional romantic poets, but whose ideas in special areas make us think of them now as revolutionaries. There is Henrik Wergeland, poet, historian and journalist, whose brief career marked the cultural life of young Norway after the Napoleonic wars. In a poem from 1831, with the title "To a Young Poet" he advises a colleague never to look back, not concern himself with viking history, but rather with the much more interesting issues and problems of the present day. It sounds like Georg Brandes one generation later. Wergeland's concern, like that of Brandes, was freedom, more particularly political freedom. When Brandes presented Byron's fight for Greek freedom as a turning point in the history of European reaction, he could have told his audience that Wergeland had written poetry calling for the liberation of Poles and Spaniards and Jews, and for the negroes in America. Wergeland

was proud of the Norwegian constitution of 1814 as being among the most liberal in Europe, and he wrote its history, but was much upset by its second article, which forbade Jews to enter the kingdom of Norway. In the late thirties and early forties he devoted all his energies as a poet and citizen to have the so-called Jew paragraph rescinded. He introduced legislation, printed handbills, and published poetry – indeed his finest verse – to influence public opinion, and in 1851 – seven years after Wergeland's death – the Jew paragraph was finally removed from the constitution. Wergeland's spirit lived on in the efforts of another historian, Professor Ernst Sars, who in his periodicals 50 years later set out to educate Norwegians about the meaning of intellectual freedom. In recent years scholars have claimed that Sars ought to share with Brandes the reputation for having helped free Norwegian literature from the restraints of idealism and romanticism. Henrik Wergeland's younger sister, Camilla – known under her married name of Collett – more directly deserves the label realist. It has been claimed (Heber, 1914) that the literary circle to which Camilla Collett belonged was influenced by Junges Deutschland and its theoretician Ludolf Wienbarg with his slogan "Greift in die Zeit, greift in euren eigenen Busen" (*Wanderungen durch den Thierkreis*, 1835). Camilla Collett's indignation, though, was equally inspired by George Sand and by her own experience of love and marriage. In 1855 she published what is usually referred to as Norway's first realistic novel, *The Governor's Daughters*, in which, for the first time in Norwegian literature, she discussed marriage as a business transaction carried out by the young people's parents. Even though the novel formally speaking belongs within the romantic tradition, its ideas, which are further emphasized in Collett's later work, definitely point to the radical realism or naturalism of the 1880s. Camilla Collett liked to think of herself as a model for Nora in *A Doll's House* and Ibsen did not disabuse her of this illusion, but more directly *The Governor's Daughters* is a precursor of Jonas Lie's *The Family at Gilje*.

Most radical among Scandinavian books discussing women's position in society, however, was the Swedish novel *Sara Videbeck* from 1838. The author was Carl Jonas Love Almquist, 15 years older than Wergeland, but like him a poet with links to 18th century revolutionary movements. Of special background, Karin Westman Berg (424) mentions Rousseau, Harriet Martineau and, more particularly, George Sand, with her plea for the *emancipation passionelle* and the interest of Fourierism in woman's *droit au travail.* Through his connections with the new liberal press in Sweden, Almquist was exposed to European realism long before the time of George Brandes and changed his ideas and his writing style, and, as was often the case in Scandinavia, more radically than some of his models. The Swedish title of his novel from 1838 is "It is possible" or "It is acceptable," and what is acceptable to the author is for a woman and a man to live together without being married. Some of the so-called poetic realists of the mid 19th century naturally reacted against its radicalism, but Strindberg did not consider it a particularly dangerous book, and though Almquist belonged to the Swedish writers he approved of, claimed that his own inspiration had come from other sources, Rousseau, Spencer, Mill. Nevertheless, Almquist, because of his artistic energy, the wide range of his gifts, and the contradictions in his outlook and temperament, is usually seen as Strindberg's precursor in Swedish literature.

Scandinavian women writers, because of their fixed place in the home, more naturally produce "everyday stories", which has resulted in the claim that, in realism, men have been more concerned with ideology in the sense of *Tendenz,* women with pure representation. This is seen in a number of works by Almquist's contemporaries. As also in Norway (Collett), their work shows a transitional form, with romantic heroes placed in a realistic landscape, as in the novels of Fredrika Bremer, describing life among settlers in America, or those of Emilie Flygare-Carlén, with her everyday scenes from the West Coast of Sweden. In Denmark, Mrs. Gyllembourg had already become known as

the author of *En Hverdags-Historie* (An Everyday Story, 1828) and other stories describing bourgeois life in Copenhagen. Very different is a precursor of Denmark's great Jens Peter Jacobsen. In 1857, the year of *Madame Bovary*, Hans Egede Schach wrote his novel *The Phantasts*, about the danger of daydreaming. It does not have the sordid detail of Flaubert's novel, though its realism is striking for Biedermeier Denmark. However, in its lack of social commentary, it points forward beyond realism and naturalism to European modernism.

Brandes was fully aware that with the new ideas of realism belonged a new language, which he was not able to supply, being himself conservative and lacking in linguistic innovation. I have mentioned Strindberg's creative genius, and could have added that of Knut Hamsun, both of them influenced by the rough and ready language of the popular press. A sense of realistic language was also evident in the many "pictures from daily life" that appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century – August Blanche's and Harald Meltzer's scenes from the Stockholm and Kristiania underworld, or Per Sivle's country anecdotes written in the Voss dialect. In Finland this kind of *kleinkunst* was elevated to national literature in the work of Alexis Kivi, whose *Seven Brothers* (1870) depends for its success on the colorful language and actions of Finnish farm boys. (It should be pointed out that in Scandinavia such types of non-political literature were never a substitute for revolutionary action. Sivle, best known for his humorous tales, also wrote the first Norwegian novel about workers, the novel *Strike* from 1891). A different line was that of Bjørnson, who, under the influence of Norwegian folk tales and Icelandic sagas, produced a lapidary style with short, coordinated sentences that proved to be most effective in his early so-called peasant tales from the 1850s and early 1860s. These have connections with Auerbach's *Dorfgeschichten*, though in rustic Norway they had a more general appeal, forming an early Norwegian *Bildungsroman* – romantic in its nationalism, but with many darkly realistic scenes and modern dialogues. This style helped remove the German *Kanzleisprache* that

colored much Scandinavian prose from the Romantic era. On the other hand, there was also a need to rid onself of the kind of stilted saga pastiche that Ibsen had used in his early play *The Vikings at Helgeland* (1857). By the 1880s Ibsen could write to a potential American translator:

> I consider it most important that the dialogue in the translations be kept as close to ordinary, everyday speech as possible. All turns of speech and inflections that belong only in books must be carefully avoided in plays, especially in plays like mine, which aim at making the reader or spectator feel that during the reading of performance he is actually experiencing a piece of real life (Ibsen, *Letters*, 211).

The names I have brought up are but a few of the many pioneers and there can be no doubt that a fully-fledged realism would eventually have come to Scandinavia even without Georg Brandes. Indeed, much of that for which Scandinavian realism was especially admired and feared – the openness in the discussion of sex, marriage and religion – was already present in the work of representative Scandinavian romantics. On the other hand, Brandes' gift of intellectual leadership was remarkable. He was the burning glass, bringing radiation from far and near into focus on the local scene until it caught fire. He knew personally many of the great names of European literature and corresponded with others – Nietzsche could rightly refer to him as "ein solcher guter Europäer und Cultur-Missionaer" (Nolin, 156) – and he was aided by the enthusiasm of a band of youthful followers, which helped him create an early and extremely forceful school of literary realism. And Brandes was not only active as an importer of foreign ideas, but gradually as a salesman of the new domestic products. With the exception of 13th century Icelandic saga writing, no literary period in Scandinavia has ever had a similar influence on World Literature and I would like to conclude with some remarks on its reception abroad.

Apart from the great dramatists, Ibsen and Strindberg, the Scandinavian realists seem to have aroused no more than passing interest in France. In the Victorian societies of England and

America, a reputation for liberalism in ethics and religion, for socialistic proclivities or anarchistic contempt made Scandinavian writers attractive to certain critics, but not popular. Except for Ibsen, none of the Norwegians mentioned above gained a lasting reputation, and even Strindberg was not translated until well into the 20th century. German-speaking people, on the other hand, took an early interest in Scandinavian realism and spread the news of its power and quality to other countries. Ludwig Geiger wrote in 1891:

> ein neuer Roman eines nordischen Meisters der Erzählkunst erregt in dem deutschen Publikum, das jene Schöpfungen fast mit noch grösser Aufmerksamkeit verfolgt als das nordische selbst, ganz bestimmte, Erwartungen. Man sieht einem neuen Triumph des Realismus entgegen, man hofft oder fürchtet, je nach der Individualität des Lesenden, sich auf den Kampfplatz streitender Theorien versetzt zu sehen (Baumgartner, 91).

By that time, tough, there had been a development, a conversion to Scandinavian attitudes from an earlier, more negative stance. Auerbach and Spielhagen, for instance, had both found Ibsen's *A Doll's House* "verstimmend und für den Gesamteindruck peinlich" (Baumgartner, 107); Heyse called *Ghosts* "widerwärtig" (Nolin, 104). Both Ibsen and Bjørnson had been described by Paul Ernst as "pessimistische Realisten: sie üben Kritik, sie klagen an, sie fragen, aber sie geben nichts Positives, sie sagen nicht, was gethan werden muss, sie haben keine Antworten (Baumgartner, 120). Even Theodor Fontane demanded a novel in which "eine schöne Seele das Ganze belebt" and wrote in 1883 of works by Kielland and others: "Diese Hässlichkeiten sind nicht Realismus" (Baumgartner, 168). Ten years later, however, Arne Garborg's novel *Peace* was greeted differently: "Garborg ist ein echter Germane. Mit diesem Friedensbuche besitzt unsere streitbare deutsche Literatur ein modernes Meisterwerk mehr" (Baumgartner, 142). And in 1897 Wilhelm Bölsche wrote: "Ich nehme gar keinen Anstand, Garborg geradezu für den grössten Techniker im Roman überhaubt zu erklären (Baumgartner, 139).

By that time, however, the young Knut Hamsun had helped inaugurate a new type of literature in Scandinavia. When he arrived in America in 1882, Knut Hamsun had produced two juvenile novels written in the style of Bjørnson's *Dorfgeschichten*, but in the States he learned to despise the pale poetry of Longfellow and to admire the rough prose of the yellow press. American newspapers, he said, contain the red fulness of life. By the time he returned to Europe in 1888, he had made himself a student of Brandes and studied some of the French naturalists whom he tried to emulate. But he had also made the acquaintance of Dostoevsky, and he now felt that Taine's idea of the *faculté maîtresse* did not describe real people; real people were, as Dostoevsky had showed, "without so-called character, split and complex, not good, not bad, but both, subtly differentiated in their natures, changing in their actions" (Naess, 30). Hamsun also felt, like Dostoevsky, that reality and the fantastic were not opposites, rather reality contained the fantastic, and he set out to render that fantastic reality in books that were unlike other Norwegian novels. Strindberg had already predicted the end of the novel and in its stead recommended the autobiography as the only truly realistic genre, but Hamsun combined fiction and autobiography in a new novel, in which he replaced what he called everyday reality with "untrodden, trackless journeyings by brain and heart, strange wanderings of the nerves, the whisper of the blood, the entreaty of the bone, the whole unconscious life of the mind" (McFarlane, 569). Brandes found this novel – *Hunger* – monotonous, and Hamsun replied: "What interests me is the endless sensitivity of my little soul; I felt I had described moods in *Hunger* whose total strangeness would not be likely to tire the reader by its monotony" (Naess, 33). And it didn't tire either readers or critics. *Hunger*, despite its so-called "stark realism", is now one of the novels that mark the end of 19th century realism in Scandinavia.

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Note on *Naturalism:* Georg Brandes himself used this last term in a somewhat confusing manner. Shelley and Byron were referred to as naturalists, but later, under the influence of Zola, Brandes usually applied the word with its now accepted meaning. On October 9, 1893 he answered an attack in *Le Figaro* thus:

> Il se moque du titre "Le *naturalisme* en Angleterre" disant, qu'il n'y a pas de *naturalisme* (de Zola) dedans, seulement d'amour de la nature, des bêtes, de la mer etc. Il ne sait pas que j'ai employé ce mot naturalisme dans ce sens *1873*, quand le naturalisme de Zola n'existait pas encore.—Ce n'est pas ma faute qu'on a employé depuis dans un autre pays ce mot dans un autre sens.

It should be added here that the word realism in its modern sense was used already in the 1830s by such Scandinavian critics as Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom. Although the terms and the periods differ somewhat from country to country, in Scandinavian literary histories the period 1820 (30)–1840 (50) is often referred to as "poetic realism"; "naturalism" is used for the 1880s, "symbolism" or "neo-romanticism" for the 1890s, and "neo-realism" for the early 20th century.

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