

SCAND 508: Spring 2005
Topics in Scandinavian Prose:
From Romantic to Modernist – Metafiction and Metaphysics

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Tues. and Thurs., 1:30 -3:20, Raitt 314
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:30 - 4:30 pm or by apt.

Primary Texts:

1. Hans Christian Andersen, “Flipperne,” “En Rose fra Homers Grav,” “Den lille Havfrue,” “Skyggen,” “Det nye Aarhundredes Musa,” “Dryaden,” “Om Aartusinder,” “Pebersvendens Hathue” og “Den stumme Bog” (1835 - 1868; translated as “The Collar,” “A Rose from Homer’s Grave,” “The Little Mermaid,” “The Shadow,” “The Muse of the Twentieth Century,” “The Wood Nymph,” “In a Thousand Years’ Time,” “The Pepperman’s Nightcap,” and “The Silent Album”)*
2. Søren Kierkegaard, *Forførelers Dagbog* (1843; translated by Hong as *The Seducer’s Diary*)*
3. Knut Hamsun, *Pan* (1894; translated by Lyngstad).
4. Hjalmar Söderberg, *Dr. Glas* (1905; translated by Britten Austin as *Doctor Glas*)
5. Aino Kallas, *Sudenmorsian* (1928; translated by Matson as “The Wolf’s Bride”)*
6. Sigrid Undset, *Kransen* (1920; translated by Nunnally as *The Wreath*).
7. Karen Blixen, “Fra det gamle Danmark,” “Peter og Rosa,” “Det ubeskrevne Blad,” and “Babette’s Gæstebud” (as Isak Dinesen, “The Fish,” “Peter and Rosa,” “The Blank Page,” and “Babette’s Feast”)(1942/1958)*
8. Pär Lagerkvist, *Dvärgen* (1944; translated by Wing as *The Dwarf*).

* (available in course reader at AVE copy center):

Course Goals and Proposed Questions:

Topics in Scandinavian Prose 2005 focuses on a selection of narratives representing various prose genres: novels, novellas, tales and stories. The selected texts exemplify some of the conventions and tendencies of Romanticism, Neo-Romanticism/Symbolism, and Modernism, closely affiliated literary movements. The selected texts will likely prove useful in exploring some of the following questions:

1. **Romantic or Modernist?** What is the relevance or usefulness of these terms for the study of literary texts? How are these terms defined or re-defined by recent scholarship

and critical literature? How are these terms distinctly applicable to Scandinavian literary history? How are definitions of “Romantic” or “Modern” literature represented or challenged by the selected texts?

2. Meta-textual or metafiction? Metafiction is generally regarded as a ‘Modern’ literary phenomenon, as fiction that deals playfully and self-referentially with the creative process, with the conventions of fiction, with the author, and with language itself. Do/how do these texts operate on a self-referential level or as meta-texts? Further, what role does the narrator play in a metafictional text?

3. Religious Representations? Romantic and modernist texts often range in the spiritual, religious, or “metaphysical” realm. Certainly, the Romantics, Symbolists, Neo-Romantics and Modernists tended to cultivate the religious, the spiritual, and the metaphysical dimensions of human experience. There are many ways in which these texts lend themselves to analysis of the representation of specific religious beliefs, dogmas, and institutions. What is the relationship between the text and specific mythologies or religions [for example, Catholicism, Protestantism, Pantheism, etc.]? How does the text, the narrator, or the author construct, challenge, encourage or undermine a religious sensibility? (Questions of gender construction would work well here too).

4. Genre questions: As this is a course in prose, students might also consider the distinguishing characteristics of various prose genres. What distinguishes the novella from the novel (*roman*)? The fairy tale or tale (*eventyr*) from the story (*historie*)? What are the generic conventions at play in these texts? How are first-person narratives or “diaries” used as a novelistic device? What are the various subgenres of the novel represented by this selection?

Preparation and Participation:

SCAN 508 is geared to graduate students in Scandinavian Studies, although graduate students in Comparative Literature and related fields are also welcome and may read in the works in English translation. MA and PhD students in Scandinavian Studies are expected to read the texts in the original languages (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish), as much as possible. English translations of the required reading are provided to accommodate graduate students specializing in Finnish or Baltic languages as well as graduate students from other programs. Students are encouraged to consult appropriate literary histories and criticism in preparation for seminar discussions; lists of recommended works will be provided.

Film adaptations:

As time permits, we may view some selections from the following Scandinavian film adaptations: Henning Carlsen’s *Pan* (1995), Liv Ullman’s *Kristin Lavransdatter* and Gabriel Axel’s *Babettes Gæstebud* (1987).

Assignments:

In addition to the usual formal term paper, students are asked to engage in some “low-stakes” writing assignments, which are intended to aid in the development of research topics as well as to encourage academic writing as a “natural” tool in intellectual discourse:

- Response “letters” (1-2 pages, addressed to a person, real or fictive, who is assumed to have read the text) on six of the assigned literary texts are required. These papers will be read and returned (un-graded) on a weekly basis. These “letters” are intended as part of the course “conversation” and will hopefully assist students in formulating their views and questions on the weekly selections. At the end of the quarter, the marked letters should be included with other assignments in a “course portfolio.”
- A 2-3 page “critical review” of a selected work of critical theory or literary criticism relevant to the student’s research topic is intended as useful preparation for the research paper. A list of suggested works will be provided, but the field is wide open. The critical reviews are due May 18th
- Finally, students will also develop research papers (10 – 15 pages) related to the seminar topic. Papers will be presented in a “Seminar Colloquium” which will take place during the final week of the quarter. In preparation for the writing of the paper, an “abstract” (250 words) and a bibliography should be submitted on May 12th.

Evaluation:

15%` Participation: seminar discussions; leading of one discussion; colloquium presentation of final paper.

Materials to be collected and submitted in course portfolio:

5% 1- 2 page written self-assessment. Credit/No-credit.

20% Response “letters” on six selected texts, due *the same week as assigned text*. Credit/No-credit.

10% 2-3 page critical review of selected work of critical theory or literary criticism relevant to research paper topic. Graded.

50% 10-15 page research paper, formatted according to MLA guidelines. Graded. Assignment includes a paper “abstract” (250 words) and bibliography due in seventh week of quarter.

Proposed Schedule and Due Dates:

Week #1

Tu 3/29 Introduction: Course Goals and questions/Assignments
Metafictive Andersen
Read: "Flipperne" and "En Rose fra Homers Grav"

Th 3/31 Romantic Andersen
Read: "Den lille Havfrue" and "Skyggen"

Week #2

Tu 4/5 Modern Andersen/Andersen the Travel Writer
Read: "Det nye Aarhundredes Musa," "Dryaden," & "Om Aartusinder"
Discussant (1): Mark Safstrom

Th 4/7 Self-Referential Andersen
Read: "Pebersvendens Nathue" and "Den stumme Bog"
(Begin introduction to Kierkegaard)
Letter #1 due

Week #3

Tu 4/14 Kierkegaard and Context: Aesthetics/Ethics and the 'Interesting' Narrator
Discussant (2): Margareta Dancus
Read: Kierkegaard, *Forførelers Dagbog*

Thu 4/16 Read: Kierkegaard, *Forførelers Dagbog*
Discussant (3): Anna Anderson
Letter #2 due

Week #4

Tu 4/19 Hamsun and Neo-Romanticism; Panic, Passion, and 'Unreliable' Narrators
Read: Hamsun, *Pan*

Th 4/21 Discussant (4): Peter Leonard
Read: Hamsun, *Pan*
Letter #3 Due

Week #5

Tu 4/26 Söderberg and Decadence; Modern Murder
Read: Söderberg, *Dr. Glas*

Th 4/28 Discussant (5): Tom Johnson
Read: Soderberg, *Dr. Glas*
Letter #4 due

Week #6

Tu 5/3 Kallas and Estonia; Feminist Discourse of the Early Century
Read: Aino Kallas, "The Wolf's Bride"
Discussant (6): Mia Spangenberg

Thu 5/5 SASS-Meeting in Portland

Week #7

Tu 5/10 Sigrid Undset; Imagining Medieval Norway and Constructing Catholicism
Read: Undset, *Kransen*
Letter #5 due (on Kallas and/or Undset)

Th 5/12 Read: Undset, *Kransen*
Discussant (7): Cheryl Zilinskas
Paper Abstract (250 words) and bibliography due

Week #8

Tu 5/17 Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen); Inverting Andersen and Kierkegaard
Read: Karen Blixen, "Fra det gamle Danmark" and "Peter og Rosa"
Discussant (8)? Anne Vestergaard?

Thu 5/18 Karen Blixen, "Babettes Gæstebud" and "Det ubeskrevne Blad"
Discussant (9): Andrea Baer
Review of Critical Literature due

Week #9

Tu 5/24 Lagerkvist and Cubism; Political and Religious Commentaries
Read: Lagerkvist, *Dvärgen*

Thu 5/26 Discussant (10): Ralitsa Lazarova
Read: Lagerkvist, *Dvärgen*
Letter #6 due

Week #10

Tu 5/31 "Seminar Colloquium I" (5 presentations)
Text: TBA

Thu 6/2 "Seminar Colloquium II" (5 presentations)
Text: TBA

Due Wednesday, June 8th: Course Portfolio including:

Completed Research Paper, Six response letters, Critical review, and Self-Assessment

