As if they all had the Tinderbox: Cultural Radicalism in Interwar Denmark.

Poul Henningsen. Hans Kirk.

By

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To Niels

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Abstract

The present study examines the origins, the unfolding of, and the ultimate fate of the Danish interwar movement for social change that has come to be known as cultural radicalism. Building off the work of postwar historiography, cultural radicalism is identified as an outgrowth of the earlier, late 19th century movement of literary radicalism, inaugurated and largely led by the Danish literary critic and public intellectual Georg Brandes. Unlike Brandesian radicalism, which was a project largely preoccupied with what is here termed individual or bourgeois emancipation, the cultural radicalism of the 1930s also attached itself to the emerging labor movement in Denmark; it is thereby defined as a social movement in which the two poles of what is here called the emancipatory project, that of the individual and that of social class, exist in a state of constant tension. Turning to the leading lights of the movement, the study first addresses the figure of the architect and cultural critic Poul Henningsen, in whom it is argued there is a pronounced tendency toward the individualist side of the emancipatory project. The study then proceeds to an examination of the collective novelist Hans Kirk, in whom the inner tension of cultural radicalism is revealed to be the inverse; in Kirk there is identified a much stronger orientation toward class struggle than that of the individual. The dissertation then proceeds to a brief summary of the fate of the movement in the postwar years, with special consideration for events after the conservative ascendancy of 2001, in which the concept was once again revived, this time almost entirely in a defensive iteration. The study concludes, finally, with a consideration of what we in the human sciences may learn and take away from the movement as we strive to renew the emancipatory project in our Anglo-American part of the world.

Preface

Andersen, in the tale of the tinderbox, tells of a soldier, one, two, one, two, he comes marching along the country road. Thanks to a witch he becomes rich, he keeps for himself the rare tinderbox which he fetched for her. Which he only needs to touch and three huge dogs fulfill his every wish. The people on the march of whom we are about to speak all act is if they had, indeed as if they were, the tinderbox. There are poor devils and great men among them, but they all venture beyond what is apportioned to them, flare up high like fire.

-Ernst Bloch

The various figures who make up the Danish interwar social movement that has come to be known as cultural radicalism very much indeed proceed "as if they all had the tinderbox." Yet those who assume the mantle of *kulturradikaler* were not, as shall become apparent, the first of the radicals in Danish intellectual and cultural history. This distinction belongs to the group of specifically *literary* radicals, gathered around the towering figure of the critic and public intellectual Georg Brandes, whose seminal introductory lecture on *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* in November 1871 formally launched the first phase of radicalism in Denmark. This earlier version of radicalism should be understood as in its essence an *emancipatory* project, but rather narrowly defined, in that the Brandesian radicals primarily sought the emancipation of the *single individual* from the artificial constraints of bourgeois civilization, the old *enhedskultur* which had dominated Danish politics and culture since the mid-19th century transition to parliamentary democracy. The various figures associated with Brandesian literary radicalism, the Danes Jens Peter Jacobsen or Holger Drachmann, the Norwegians Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and most famously Henrik Ibsen, in Sweden the early Strindberg among others, do not by and large question the fundamental precepts of bourgeois

civilization, the right and duty of the bourgeoisie to rule. Instead, the late 19th century radicals seek in essence a kind of calling to accounts of the bourgeoisie, for they seek to bring actually existing society into greater accord with the principles of revolutionary France, with the "humane" liberalism of Rousseau and with the more stubbornly individualistic liberalism of Mill. The Brandesians dreamed large, but with very few exceptions the working class, the emerging industrial proletariat, does not figure on their radar.

With respect to the second phase of radicalism in Denmark, that of the specifically *cultural* radicalism of the 1920s and 1930s, we shall see that these radicals not only resume the struggle for individual emancipation that had animated the literary radicals, but also, crucially, attach themselves to the growing labor movement in Norden; in effect they attempt to do that which always eluded their precursors, for they seek effectively to "break out of the bourgeois parlor," to dedicate themselves to what is here termed the other half of the emancipatory project, that being the emancipation of social class or, more properly here, of the *collectivity*. In cultural radicalism, as we shall see, the twin poles of the emancipatory project, the individual and the collective, exist in a state of constant tension. As is evident from the early Marx's distinction between individual (or bourgeois) emancipation and social (or human) emancipation, as well as, to a lesser extent, the somewhat thinner line between Berlin's notion of positive and negative liberties, these two forms of emancipation are by no means the same; indeed, history has demonstrated that more often than not they have been in open conflict with one another, particularly in our Anglo-American part of the world. What happens in Denmark after the collapse of the

world economy in 1929 and in the subsequent rise of National Socialism in Germany, however, is fundamentally distinct from much of the rest of the world, for in the Nordic countries the advocates of what Marx would call bourgeois emancipation, here the early cultural radicals, effectively join forces with the emergent labor movement; for the entirety of the 1930s and briefly into the postwar era, the poles of the emancipatory project thus exist in a rather happy harmony.

The present study begins with a treatment of the movement as a coherent whole, as a collectivity. Herein is investigated the roots of cultural radicalism in its earlier Brandesian iteration, with special attention to which aspects of literary radicalism are carried over and which aspects are entirely new. Considerable effort is made in the first chapter to develop as precise a definition of the rather admittedly thorny concept of cultural radicalism as is possible; special care is here afforded to distinguishing the considerable differences in meaning between the twin elements of the Danish compound *kulturradikal* from their often misleading equivalents in English. The opening chapter concludes with a brief evaluation of the successes and failures of the movement. Here it is demonstrated that in the movement's individualist aspect, specifically its efforts for sexual and women's emancipation as well as pedagogical reform, its basic program was by around the year 1960 effectively incorporated into the platform of the ruling Social Democratic party; cultural radicalism in its individualist aspect had thus become *aufgehoben*. But in their struggle for what is here termed the *cultural emancipation of the working class*, the cultural radicals particular platform for the sublation of bourgeois culture into a kind of new *Arbeiterkultur,* their efforts met with considerably less approval, provoking the

cultural radical luminary Poul Henningsen to proclaim in the early 1960s that the dream of an *Arbeiterkultur* was effectively over.

In the second chapter of the present study we address the aforementioned figure of Poul Henningsen, architect and designer, poet and songwriter, above all *kulturkritiker*. Here we shall see that in Henningsen, whose links to the earlier, Brandesian radical movement are strongest and most concrete, there exists a strong leaning towards the individualist side of the emancipatory project. It is only after a long journey away from his roots in the radical bourgeoisie that Henningsen comes to embrace the project of class emancipation, a journey that culminates in his 1933 *kampskrift Hvad med Kulturen?* [*What about Culture?*]. This seminal text, a kind of "communist apologia," shall be examined at length, with special emphasis to its particularly Nordic relation to Habermas' concept of the philosophical discourse of modernity. In the third chapter we turn to the figure of the collective novelist Hans Kirk, who in effect represents the opposite pole of the movement. In comparison with Henningsen who during the interwar period served as the very public face of the movement and to this day remains its primary standard bearer, Hans Kirk's relation to the movement is considerably less direct and concrete. Indeed, it is customary among Kirk scholars to identify the early- to mid-1920s as the author's "cultural radical phase," after which he turned to an increasingly hardened Marxist orientation. Hans Kirk's intellectual journey in some ways could thus be seen as the inverse of Henningsen's, for he begins with a profound sense of social outrage, proceeds through a period in which he warms to cultural radicalism, and then increasingly turns his back on the movement for its presumed lack of seriousness with respect to the class struggle. His particular loyalties

were always less with the emerging urban proletariat, to whom Henningsen hitches his sails, than with the relatively impoverished *landproletariat* of rural Denmark, whose cause he made his own and whose story he would relate in his grand cycle of collective novels, *Daglejerne* [*The Day Laborers*, 1936] and *De ny tider* [*The New Times*, 1939]; this curious "double-novel" shall also be discussed at length.

In the concluding fourth chapter we shall briefly discuss the fate of cultural radicalism after the Second World War, beginning with the immediate postwar era in which rather substantial cracks begin to appear in the aforementioned happy harmony between the movement individual and collective poles. We shall then gesture to the post-2001 era, the period of the Danish conservative ascendancy, in which the concept of cultural radicalism has been revived, albeit this time around in an almost exclusively *defensive* iteration. The study concludes with an appraisal of those aspects of cultural radicalism which may prove to be instructive to we humanists in the contemporary Anglophone world, in particular those of us who still believe in the dual nature of the emancipatory project, and who seek its renewal in our own part of the world. It is one of the central presuppositions of this project that the class/collective aspect of emancipation has long before us entered into a period of dormancy, that few of us really any longer believe in the possibilities of organized class struggle, given the human catastrophes of the Soviet Union and of China and the Neoliberal ascendancy that followed in their wake. And it is further here presumed that it is incumbent upon us as humanists in the age of Bourdieu's *machine infernale* that we seek to do our part in the reviving of that other half of

the emancipatory project, that of class struggle. From the *kulturradikalere* we have much to learn here indeed.

Chapter One: The Roots of Cultural Radicalism

Lys over Landet. Det er det, vi vil.

-J.P. Jacobsen

Der Weg ist alles, das Ziel nichts.

-Paul Natorp

The term *kulturradikalismen* [cultural radicalism] officially entered the Danish language in a July 1955 *Politiken* editorial by the eminent literary scholar and former resistance member Elias Bredsdorff.[1] The occasion for the editorial was the general apathy and indifference with which the British parliamentary elections of that year had been greeted, which the then Cambridge University Lecturer in Danish had witnessed first hand. In a gesture well known to anyone versed in the intergenerational twists and turns of the unfolding of cultural modernity, a phenomenon most recently (and perhaps for the last

[1] It must be noted here that the concept of cultural radicalism had been circulating in both Norway and Sweden somewhat earlier. Bredsdorff's essay is, in fact, not the very first instance of the term in the Danish press; this honor belongs to the Norwegian novelist and veteran *kulturradikaler* Sigurd Hoel, who at the request of the editors of *Politiken* published an essay entitled "Modstand mod . . . : Kultur-radikalismens fremtidsproblemer—i revisionens tegn" in the May 15th edition of the newspaper earlier that year. This essay was in turn answered on July 10th in *Social-Demokraten* by the Danish cultural radical luminary Poul Henningsen, one day before Bredsdorff's editorial appeared. In spite of the fact that the term was not in fact coined in Denmark, there is general agreement among scholars that cultural radicalism as a distinctive and influential movement made itself felt most decisively in Denmark, rather than Norway or Sweden. For more on the cultural radical national hierarchy, see Carl Erik Bay "Kulturradikalismen" 13-15.

time?) manifested during the Alex P Keaton 1980s, Bredsdorff effectively deploys a particular understanding of the elder generation, defined here by its relatively greater spirit of rebelliousness as well as its comparatively larger engagement with the world, as a means of critiquing the perceived complacency and self-absorption of the present. Reflecting on the England he had visited as an exchange student in 1934, Bredsdorff recalls on the part of young intellectuals a heightened sense of political engagement, a general flowering of Left-oriented student organizations and, as a response to the rise of National Socialism and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, a growing sense "that there was something to fight for and something to fight against."[2] Conditions in the England of the 1950s could not, the critic observes, be more distinct, the large majority of the educated classes preoccupied with that "melancholy Dane" Søren Kierkegaard, the less privileged no less enthralled by the "gabardine angel" Billy Graham (59). Anticipating the monumental impact of the Thatcher ascendancy that was still then more than twenty years away, Bredsdorff decries above all an increasing sense of *social atomization*: "The individual has more than enough to handle with his own problems; thus the world around him must take care of itself as best it can" (58).

The object of Bredsdorff's address, of course, is not the youth of England but of Denmark, and in turning to his native land the critic (and longtime expat) is at considerable pains to avoid coming off as a scold. His seeming rebuke of contemporary Danish young people is in fact far more an indictment of the failings of his own generation, specifically its

[2] The editorial, entitled "Om at fodre sine karusser," first appeared in the July 7, 1955 issue of *Politiken*. It is reprinted *Kulturradikale essays* 57-61. All translations from the Danish by the author unless otherwise noted.

role in effectively delimiting the horizons of intellectual curiosity and even of free expression itself for the generation then coming of age. The ultimate victory over National Socialism in Denmark had constituted the "greatest triumph" of the anti-fascist movement in which the critic himself had played no small part, but it was also, paradoxically enough, "at the same time its defeat" (59). In particular, Bredsdorff here refers to that brief moment in the immediate post-war period in which the possibility remained that "Denmark and the rest of Scandinavia could be a bridge between East and West, a bridge that unites two worlds" (61). But Scandinavia (with the notable exception of the Finns, as well as, to a lesser extent, the Swedes) did not ultimately opt to follow this admittedly more difficult path, which would have amounted to a more a robust assertion of the legitimacy of the *folkhemmet* as a system of social organization coequal with that of Soviet communism and the liberalism of the West. It is one of the central preconceptions of this study that the Nordic countries, at least with respect to domestic affairs, do indeed pursue in the 20th century a course that is in its essence *qualitatively distinct* from that of the continent and even more so of the Anglo-American sphere. But with respect to foreign policy, the Nordic countries largely hitched their sails to the cause of the capitalist West, thereby inscribing within the culture the kind of absolute binary distinction between "acceptable" and "unacceptable" thought characteristic of the Cold War. For Bredsdorff this constitutes a kind of cultural self-strangulation, an all too willing submission to a manner of thinking that demands "a 'yes' or a 'no,' when it is often felt that in the name of the truth the best that could be answered is a 'yes, but . . .' or a 'no, but . . . '"(59). It is crucial to note here that Bredsdorff, as a founding member in 1935 of the anti-fascist front Frisindet Kulturkamp,

understood the struggle against fascism in Denmark to have been above all a *cultural* struggle; indeed, much of the current chapter is devoted precisely to teasing out the particular valences this term would come to acquire during the Danish interwar period. And in that mortal contest, which played itself out in thousands of journal articles and newspaper editorials, in public meetings and in labor agitation, and even in the occasional street confrontation, it was more than anything, again according to the understanding of its veterans, the movement's particular *tankegang* [manner of thinking, or perhaps more narrowly here *manner of relating to the existing social world*]—restlessly curious, stubbornly optimistic, playfully irreverent, highly inflected, deeply engaged—that had proved to be decisive. But in their failure, in the years immediately following the conclusion of the war, to compel the established regimes of power to forge a national destiny independent of and in stark opposition to that of the emerging superpowers and their subjugated satellites, the generation of the thirties effectively betrayed the spirit of free and honest inquiry they themselves had staked out under the most difficult of conditions in the years preceding. In so doing, Bredsdorff mournfully concedes, they had bequeathed to the coming generation an intellectual climate increasingly coming to resemble that of the land that had birthed the Distinguished Gentleman from Wisconsin.[3]

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[3] Bredsdorff stops short of identifying a pronounced McCarthyite strain in the Denmark of the 1950s, although he does cite with considerable alarm a number of recent cases suggesting as much. A particularly telling example involves the critic's use of the word *livsbekræftende* [optimistic] in a review of the play *Den blå pekingeser* [*The Blue Pekingese*, 1954] by the Danish dramatist Kjeld Abell, long a bogeyman in Danish crypto-McCarthyite circles. Jens Kistrup, theater critic at the conservative *Berlingske Tidende*, immediately pounced, noting that the use of the term *livsbekræftelse* (!) is "as is well known an element of communist cultural tactics" (60).

Little wonder, then, that intellectually-inclined young Danes of the mid-1950s had effectively checked out, for they had been made to believe no less than that fully "one half of the world is ruled by good men, the other half by evil" (59).

Bredsdorff's proposed remedy for the presently circumscribed and stilted nature of Danish intellectual life, as has been noted, is phrased in the form of a *call for a return*, specifically to that same spirit of fearless critical inquiry that had characterized the loosely-defined interwar cultural movement (of which anti-fascist agitation had only constituted a single, albeit crucial component; indeed, we shall see later in the current chapter that the roots of this movement stretch back at least into the mid-1920s) that had previously, and rather less than satisfyingly, been known only as *frisindet* [freethinking]. In a gesture that would prove immensely consequential for future historical scholarship as well as, equally as much, the ongoing practice of *kulturkritik*, the critic, perhaps intuiting the insufficiency of this admittedly rather hoary term, effectively renamed the freethinking movement to that of *cultural radicalism*. It is arguable that it is precisely this act of coinage rather than the actual content of the critic's characterization of the newly rechristened movement's manner of thinking that accounts for the enormous influence of the essay on future Danish cultural discourse.[4] And yet the particular description offered up by Bredsdorff would exert some considerable influence on future attempts both to characterize the historical

[4] The concept of cultural radicalism would figure prominently in the New Radicalism of the 1960s before, after the conservative ascendancy of 2001, returning again as a kind of straw man, much as the contemporary American Right has attempted to resurrect the specters of Saul Alinsky and William Ayres.

movement itself as well as, moreover, ongoing debates regarding its continued presence in Danish culture. It is here quoted in full:

> There is a need for a watchful and courageous cultural radicalism today, a manner of thinking which is built upon respect for humanity, proceeds from an international perspective and is run through with social conscience. There is a need for an intellectual heresy that exposes the habitual thinking, the hypocrisy, the platitudes and the clichés, an intellectual openness that is not satisfied with the labels, but maintains an impartial point of view with respect to the realities behind them. There is a need for an ethics that is liberated from the Church and from conservative convention. There is a need for an impatience that will not wait until instances of progress have themselves become foregone conclusions or steps backward. (61)

The contemporary international reader (or even, for that matter, a Dane) may be forgiven for being rather underwhelmed at this; indeed, if one were to remove the references to the Church and to conservatism, it is by no means a stretch to imagine the author of this exegesis as a veteran of the *other side* of the interwar conflict. Who, after all, does *not* stand for "respect for humanity" or "social conscience" or against the unthinking acceptance of conventional wisdom? And even the most retrograde of conservatives would hardly admit to opposing "progress." In the unfolding of the present study, as the particular cultural context of the movement of cultural radicalism is, through examinations of its leading figures, gradually illuminated, we shall see that there is in fact much in the way of actual substance in the call of the expat, in spite of its admittedly rather vacuous initial impression. But first we must take care to define properly and comprehensively, within the context of the interwar period, the twin components of Bredsdorff's coinage—indeed, it shall be made apparent that "*kultur*" and "*radikal*" are terms freighted with extraordinary baggage in Danish, much of it in sharp contrast to that found in their equivalents in English

or in other languages—, as well as, moreover, the peculiar valences resulting from the critic's marriage of them. It is to this not inconsiderable task that we now turn.

In the first place we must observe that Bredsdorff's coinage by no means constitutes the generation of an entirely new word *ex nihilo*; in contrast, like most such instances of scholarly creativity at this late historical moment, the critic instead performs an act of *compounding*, attaching to an already widely circulating concept a modifying adjective, here "*kulturel*" to "*radikalismen*." And by no means should this maintenance of intellectual modesty be construed as anything other than genuine. Bredsdorff is in fact acutely aware that the concept of radicalism had already in the 1870s come to represent a peculiar school of *kulturkritik*; namely that associated with the literary critic Georg Brandes and the epoch-forming literary movement he had deemed *Det moderne Gennembrud* [The Modern Breakthrough], as well as, after its founding by his brother Edvard in 1905, a highly successful political party, the Radikale Venstre [Radical Left, in English referred to as the Social Liberals]. The first instance of the new term cultural radicalism in the essay actually occurs not in the previously cited call for a return, but somewhat earlier, when Bredsdorff claims a degree of continuity between prewar Brandesianism and interwar freethinking: "There is an unbroken line in Danish intellectual life from the cultural radicalism of the Brandes era through the journal *Kulturkampen*[5] in the 1930s" (59).

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[5] *Kulturkampen*, for which Bredsdorff himself served as an editor and in which many cultural radicals participated, had been founded in 1935 as the primary organ of the anti-fascist front Frisindet Kulturkamp.

Bredsdorff's effort to align both these distinct movements under the term cultural radicalism made sense at the time, and indeed the cultural radicals of the twenties and thirties would carry over many of the concerns of the older radicals, foremost among them the rigorous critique of the "façade morality" of late-Victorian Europe (Fjord Jensen 13). But when we look to the peculiar meaning the new word would come to acquire in the decades following the 1955 essay, it is clear that the critic has here unwittingly muddled the terms; the cultural radicals were not just plain old radicals, they were of course in particular *cultural* radicals. More on this absolutely crucial distinction will follow; suffice it to say here that much of it hinges upon the cultural radicals' specific commitment to the politics of class and of class struggle, a project never really of much concern to Brandes, especially in the years after his famous encounter with Nietzsche in the late 1880s and up to his death in 1927. It is also important to mention here that the alleged "unbroken line" between the older Brandesian radicalism and the cultural radicalism of the twenties and thirties is itself debatable; indeed, it has become customary among historians to refer to the cultural radical movement as "radicalism's second phase."[6] Against a slightly longer historical backdrop, Johan Fjord Jensen has identified cultural radicalism as no less than a "third Danish Enlightenment," the first centered around the 18th century figure of Ludvig Holberg and his critique of the remnants of Lutheran Dogmatism, the second of course the struggle of Brandes and his allies against Victorianism (38).

What then was this original, "Brandesian" radicalism? And how indeed did the specifically "cultural" variant of radicalism in the twenties and thirties depart from it? It

[6] See Morten Thing's "Kulturradikalismen: radikalsimen's anden fase" as well as Nolin.

must be remembered here that the shadow of Georg Brandes looms over the entirety of Danish literary and cultural history since the late 19th century to a degree that is plainly inconceivable in the larger lands of the globe; indeed, the very idea of producing a book-length study on 20th century Danish literature without in some manner addressing him is really rather absurd, not at all unlike leaving Jelly Roll out of a volume on the history of American jazz. In the present study the treatment of the great critic and public intellectual must naturally be circumscribed, focusing only on those aspects of immediate concern to the present project.

The long career of Brandes, as has been suggested earlier, is customarily divided into two distinct phases, and furthermore it is in the first of these that his thinking mostly closely accords with that of the cultural radicals of the 1920s and 30s. This initial phase, which is often termed "literary radicalism," begins as is well known on November 3, 1871, when the young scholar delivered in Copenhagen the first of the long series of lectures that would ultimately come to be collected in six volumes under the title *Hovedstrømninger i det nittende aarhundredes litteratur* [*Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*].[7] This monumental address, which would not only launch the literary movement that was the Modern Breakthrough, but also, with even greater consequence, introduce the specifically

[7] The lectures that make up *Hovedstrømninger*, now widely considered to be among the founding documents of the then newly emerging discipline of comparative literature, were delivered at Copenhagen University between 1871 and 1877. Comprehensively charting literary developments in France, Germany and England from the turn of the 19th century up to 1848, they treat, in succession the French émigré school (published 1872), early German Romanticism (1873), the Reactionary literature of post-Restoration France (1874), British Romanticism (1875), the French Romantic school (1882), and, finally, Young Germany (1892).

Danish iteration of the idea of the radicalism (although, it must be conceded, the critic does not in the lecture employ the actual word), is extremely well-trodden territory within Danish literary history and requires only summary treatment here. In a very loose sense, the lecture anticipates in its precise structure Bredsdorff's essay of nearly a century later, in that it concludes with a call for a return to a particular manner of thinking, albeit against a much longer—and wider—historical horizon. As has been noted, Brandes has been properly identified as the inaugurator of a Second Danish Enlightenment; the object of his call for return is then accordingly the general spirit of that 18th century movement, which upheld as its ideals the concepts of freethinking and of progress, and which found its ultimate manifestation in the events of 1789. Yet the literatures of Europe's larger nations in the initial decades of the 19th century had, as the critic readily concedes, been marked by *reaction* against the perceived excesses of the previous century; echoing the dialectical reasoning of Hegel, Brandes in fact identifies the reaction as a necessity and even a kind of step forward—"a true, supplementing and course-correcting reaction is progress" (16). But European literature would ultimately, thanks in large part to the initial heroic efforts of Byron and later in the flowering of the French Romantic school and ultimately in the Young Germany movement, turn the tide of reaction, resulting in the restoration of the 18th century spirit of freethinking and progress in "new, ever higher rising waves" (14).

It is when Brandes turns to the literary history of his native land that he most brushes up against the thinking of Bredsdorff, albeit his particular indictment of the contemporary Danish intellectual climate is by far the more unforgiving. The Byronic turn against the reaction, the effective restoration of the spirit of Enlightenment optimism, is

precisely "what has not happened" (16) in Denmark; the Danes have effectively become mired in the reaction, and as a result their literature is said to have "fallen into a torpor" (17), defined by a lingering Romantic "idealism distanced from reality" that would seem to suggest that there is within the national character an essential measure of "childishness" and "naiveté," for Danish literature "deals not with our lives, but with our dreams" (20). Unlike Bredsdorff's call for a return to an earlier more engaged spirit of critical inquiry indigenous to Denmark, however, Brandes must effectively advocate for a greater openness to intellectual developments from the larger world outside its borders, for as the critic mournfully concedes, the Danes have historically never really "been in on the action" of world history, and when such change has by chance reached their "sandy coasts," they have always "sided with the reaction" (15). Brandes famously here asserts that "the fact that a literature in our time is alive is demonstrated in that it submits problems to debate" and conversely that "a literature that does not submit problems to debate is the same as one which is in the process of losing all meaning" (18). That the contemporary literatures of Europe's larger lands belong to the former category is everywhere apparent, from Sand's engagement with gender relations to Byron's and Feuerbach's critiques of religion to Proudhon's and Mill's examinations of private property; that Danish literature persists firmly within the latter category, as is evidenced by the critic's stinging review of it . . . well, that hardly need even be argued.

That Brandes' call for a new Nordic *problemlitteratur* proved to be an unqualified success now goes without saying, for only twelve years later he was to produce the volume on *Det Moderne Gjennembruds Mænd* [*The Men of the Modern Breakthrough*], a triumphalist

survey of the new movement's leading lights.[8] That twelve-year period had been momentous indeed, for it had witnessed the birth, the rise and the ultimate consolidation of the new literature within Scandinavia, most prominently, at least according to world literary historical memory, in the "problem plays" of Henrik Ibsen's newly established "Norwegian School." Yet Brandes had not of course just inspired a narrowly defined revolution in literary praxis, he had also, much more consequentially, consciously helped to organize a new oppositional *movement* within Norden, that to which in the 1871 essay he had referred as freethinking but which in the years following would gradually come to be known as *radicalism*. In so doing, Brandes effectively inaugurated a much longer cultural era that, echoing Hobsbawm, could be termed "Denmark's Long Radical Century"; a kind of grand historical construct that begins with the specifically *literary* radicalism of the 1870s. Literary radicalism would ultimately splinter in the 1880s with the establishment of a comparatively *political* radicalism, gathered around the daily newspaper *Politiken*, established in 1884 by Edvard Brandes, and after 1905 in the aforementioned Radikale Venstre party; political radicalism would prove decisive in the struggle the for full parliamentary democracy that would ultimately come to fruition in the *systemskift* of 1904. This form of radicalism was in some sense opposed to the *aristocratic* radicalism espoused by the post-Nietzsche Brandes himself, which would increasingly turn a skeptical eye upon the very idea of democracy itself. This bifurcated radical movement would eventually more

[8] The six figures profiled in the 1883 study include the Danes Jens Peter Jacobsen, Holger Drachmann, Sophus Schandorph, and (with no small measure of sheepishness on the part of the critic), his brother Edvard, as well as, better remembered today, the Norwegians Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Henrik Ibsen.

or less fizzle out in the new century, before being revived in the specifically *cultural* radicalism of the 1920s and 30s and then again in the *new* radicalism of the 1960s, before ultimately reaching its alleged "closure" with the emergence of the *Danske Folkeparti* [Danish People's Party, or DF] in the elections of November 2001, almost precisely one hundred and thirty years after its first salvos were released by the young scholar.[9]

We now turn to the effort to root out the essence of the initial, "literary" radicalism introduced by Brandes in the 1870s. This is an enterprise in which much caution must be exercised, for in attempting to extricate it from its closest correlates in English, we must recall that the term radical was by the 1870s already possessed of a lengthy history in Britain and, moreover, that its evolution since has further muddied the waters of intercultural understanding. The earliest and most general sense of radical in English belongs to the domain of natural science and denotes "of, belonging to, or from a root or roots" (*OED* A. 1a); the fidelity to the original Latin *radicalis*, from the root *radix*, is abundantly clear here. Some time in the 17th century the term appears to have broadened into a more general sense of any action or change characterized by "going to the root or origin" or "touching upon what is essential or fundamental" (*OED* A. 7a); the OED suggests here that this new usage was typically theological. It is in 18th century Britain, when a specifically *politicized* sense of the term is introduced, that matters begin to become

[9] Hans Hertel has noted how the intellectual wing of DF specifically framed the 2001 election as an "ideological system change," in which Denmark was "liberated" from "one hundred and thirty years of so-called cultural radical tyranny." The leader of the new governing coalition, Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the Venstre party, would further in 2002 effectively "declare war against the 'tastemakers and experts'" with their "1968-manner of thinking" (*Gennembrud* 12).

confused. The *OED* defines the political radical as, on the one hand, the advocacy of "thorough or far-reaching political or social reform" (A. 7b), e.g. change that "goes to the roots," and on the other as "representing or supporting an extreme section of a party" (A. 7b). Historically, the (largely bourgeois, later more broad based) British Radical movement for parliamentary reform of the late 18th and early 19th century was thus radical in that it sought *radical reform* of the institution at is very roots, specifically through the extension of suffrage and the removal of the property requirement. And it was also radical in the second sense, in that its proponents were referred to as the extreme wing of the Liberal party, and in that most certainly their program was denounced as "extreme" by their enemies, namely the landed aristocracy who stood to lose most from reform. It is absolutely crucial, however, to observe here that the first sense of the political radical is, strictly speaking, value-neutral, and that the question of whether or not a reform program seeks change at the roots or rather is content to tinker around the edges may in fact be approached with some degree of objectivity. The second sense of the political radical is of course anything but value-neutral; indeed it is highly *contestable*, for the designation of that which is and that which is not "extreme" is and always shall be the exclusive purview of the gatekeepers of the hegemonic ideology of the particular age. And it is worth noting here that by the mid 19th century, the concept of the political radical in Britain had come to shed almost all of its pejorative associations with extremism, and that the Radicals would in the 1850s be comfortably absorbed into the Liberal party, and that, most of all, their particular program was ultimately adopted not only in Britain but all over the world, with results that

could hardly be said to be "extreme."[10] But when we look at the evolution of the concept of the political radical into the present age, we find that its second sense has come to almost entirely crowd out the first, for there can be no doubt that when the term is employed in contemporary political discourse in English it is almost always in the service of excluding any idea or program that is deemed outside the parameters of the "acceptable" by the border guards of the hegemony. It is this particular connotation of English radical, that is the radical as the unacceptably extreme, that we must be most wary of in the effort to get at the essence of Brandesian radicalism.[11]

Returning now, after this rather lengthy interlude, to the initial, Brandesian radicalism of the 1870s, it must first be observed that the concept, much like the earliest usage in English (A. 1A), maintains a close connection with the original Latin *radicalis*. Indeed, the Brandesian sense of the radical could be viewed as a rather straightforward application of the Latin into the domain of social critique; indeed, the radical historian Leif Pjetursson has identified this original understanding of the term as precisely a *manner of thinking* that "takes things at their roots" and that is "penetrating and thorough," a "critical

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[10] The *OED* cites as evidence of the positive valence of radical the following, from T.P. Thompsons 1842 *Exercises*: "The term Radical once employed as a name of low reproach, has found its way into high places, and is gone forth as title of a class, who glory in their designation."

[11] It is worth noting here that Gyldendal's *Danske Ordbog* of 2005 lists as the primary definition of the adjective "radikal" the politically neutral sense of "pertaining to or involving the foundation for, the essence of or the building up of something," while the secondary definition is that of one "who works or advocates for large and thoroughgoing change." Only in the nouns "radikaler" and "radikalitet" does the sense of "outlying points of view" appear. Perhaps even more revealing, Politiken's *Store nye Nu Dansk ordbog*, which tracks specifically contemporary usage, preserves in its definition of "radikal" and "radikalisme" the link to the *frisind* movement: "that which is outlying and has a freethinking bent."

and analytic movement in which society is dissected"(7). The scientific associations of the concept of dissection here are by no means accidental, for there is inherent in the original iteration of Brandesian radicalism a strong desire to bring the practice of literature into greater accord with the practice of science, specifically with that of the French thinkers who had shaped Brandes' early intellectual development, principally the sociology of Comte and especially of Taine as well as the psychology of Sainte-Beuve.[12] And yet is important to note here that already in the 1880s Brandes would begin to distance himself from the ever more materialist and deterministic nature of the new literature, as is attested by his increasingly vehement condemnations of Zola and the new literary Naturalism.[13] The cultural radicalism of the interwar period, in sharp contrast, would effectively restore the early Brandesian faith in science and then some; indeed, as Johan Fjord Jensen has observed, cultural radicalism is to be distinguished from the earlier radicalism in that it enlisted in its cause not just "gifted authors and witty cartoonists," but "competent psychologists, educators and physicians;" in its second phase radicalism thus "had gained [scientific] authority" (22).

Brandesian literary radicalism, then, is a socially critical movement characterized by a manner of thinking that, more or less in tune with the spirit of scientific inquiry, investigates society at its very roots; but the question remains as to which aspects of society the Danish radicals were critical, and from where on the political spectrum their

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[12] *Main Currents* should be viewed, in the larger context of intellectual history, as a work of literary sociology in the vein of Taine, while Brandes' general approach to individual literary figures accords more or less with Sainte-Beuve's psychological criticism.
[13] For more on Brandes' tempestuous relation with Zola and Naturalism, see Lise Busk-Jensen in Mortensen and Schack vol. 3. 61-2.

critiques were rooted. It is absolutely crucial here to distinguish this early Danish radicalism from the English sense of the political radical, specifically its association with the "extremist" politics of the Far Left, which it had acquired already in the early 19th century and which lives on to this day, as in when we speak of the radical 1930s or 1960s. Brandesian literary radicalism should by no means, in contrast, necessarily invoke such associations, especially with respect to Brandes himself, who even in the November 1871 lecture provides a hint of his later turn away from the emerging movement toward social welfare and even the practice of democracy itself. In that inaugural lecture the young scholar specifically attributes the immaturity of contemporary Danish literature to its comparative lack of "independent, relatively highly favored men with a free and wide-ranging point of view" (24); if this sounds suspiciously like a tacit endorsement of aristocratic privilege, it is because in certain ways it is precisely that—recall here that the critic would come to define the second, post-Nietzsche phase of his career as that of *aristocratic* radicalism. It must also be observed here that radicalism in its concretely political iteration, which officially begins in 1905 with the aforementioned founding of the Radikale Venstre party by Edvard Brandes, has never been exclusively a creature of the Left. As Pjetursson has observed, the Radikale Venstre in its earliest incarnation was in fact a party without a base in the masses, the rural smallholders having long before sworn in their lot with the (now Right of Center) Venstre, the still small but growing urban proletariat firmly within the fold of the Social Democrats; it was and remains largely the party of the urban, bourgeois intellectual class (21). While it is indeed the case that the Radikale Venstre has historically tended to caucus with the parties of the Left, this is by no

means exclusively the case, as the party would take part in Center Right coalition governments in the years from 1968-1971 and 1988-1990.

With respect to literary radicalism, it is however possible to sketch at least the broad outlines of a positive political program, which should be situated within the broader tradition of European philosophical liberalism stretching back into the 18th century. Pjetursson has made of note of the inward tension within this tradition, specifically between the collectivist "humane" liberalism of Rousseau, which sought to "cement together the singular will of the individual with the common will of society" and the individualist "classical" liberalism of Smith and Ricardo, which claimed as it point of departure "the egoistic trait in human being" (13). Much of the ideological animating spirit of *Hovedstrøminger* is thus to be found in the revolutionary humane liberalism of Rousseau, which was reintroduced into Europe through the "revolutionary glow" of Byronic Romanticism and ultimately refined into the famous formula of Mill, that being the maximization of individual liberty within the parameters of the demand of the collectivity (13). And yet, as Brandes is at pains to demonstrate in the November lecture, Denmark and the rest of Scandinavia were never really entirely on board with the liberal march of history, and by the 1870s, as Pjetursson demonstrates, the Danish bourgeoisie "had entirely given up on liberalism's original ideals;" increasingly in the coming decades the inherently conservative, "hard as bone" liberalism of Smith and Ricardo would become its official ideology (14). Pjetursson thus construes the political essence of Brandesian radicalism as a kind of "ideal liberalism" in which "the ideal of freedom and the sense of social justice inseparably belong to one another" (14).

While there is indeed much of value in Pjetursson's identification of literary radicalism as a kind of ideal liberalism, it is in fact more useful to define radicalism by what the radicals were *against*, for early Brandesian radicalism was, like the cultural radicalism of the interwar period, in its very essence an *oppositional* movement. Johan Fjord Jensen has appropriately identified the primary target of literary radical critique as the hegemonic ideology of the age, namely that of the *nationalliberale enhedskultur* [national liberal, or perhaps more appropriately here, national bourgeois, culture of unity] (13). In English the concept of the *enhedskultur* corresponds fairly neatly to the idea of Victorianism; as is evidenced in Jensen's characterization of it, here quoted at length:

> As culture it was hierarchical, built up on a series of institutions in which . . . the patriarchal family was central and holiest. It rested upon a fixed moral system, which through written and unwritten rules of propriety placed an endless series of limitations on human development. In its essence it was static and self-protecting. It was pale and passionless in its understanding of life, except for when it was confronted with aberrant forms of culture that threatened it with rupture . . . against such threats it reacted with a passionate urge for self-preservation. (13)

It is absolutely crucial here to emphasize that literary radicalism did not in substance question the fundamental ideals of bourgeois civilization; as has been said, for Brandes and his allies these ideals, at least in their original, revolutionary iteration in France, constitute the very model of humane social organization; that which the radicals opposed, in contrast, was the failure of contemporary Danish bourgeois society to live up to those ideals, as evidenced by the ever growing "chasm between on the one side the official morality and on the other the side the social realities" (Fischer Hansen and Michelsen 178). The *enhedskultur* relied for its preservation on what Jensen has termed a "façade morality," according to which:

> One accepted prostitution, but condemned free sexual association; one accepted divorce, when it was proper, that is to say carried out behind the scenes, but condemned sexual association out in the open or the idea of the open marriage. One accepted unspoken atheism or apathetic Christianity, as long as established Christian conventions were observed, but condemned the open expression of religious freethinking. (13)

Literary radicalism should thus be properly conceived of as a movement that seeks radical reform not, as in the older British sense of change *at the roots* but instead radical reform in the sense of holding official society to account for the ideals it professes; Brandesian radicalism thus seeks to *get to the roots* of actually existing social reality beneath the façade of public morality and, moreover, to insist that the two are brought into greater accord. And it is precisely this aspect of literary radicalism, the unremitting critique of a civilization that relies on ever-thicker layers of obfuscation to cover up the gulf between its ideals and its reality, that the cultural radicals of the 1920s and 30s would carry over, for that second phase of Danish radicalism would constitute, as Fjord Jensen has observed, the "last and the final" revolt "against Victorianism" (13). And it is in this sense that the famous motto of Poul Henningsen, perhaps the single figure most closely associated with cultural radicalism who shall receive comprehensive treatment in a later chapter, should be understood: *sandheden er altid revolutionær*—the truth is always revolutionary. Likewise with Bredsdorff's call for a manner of thinking "that is not satisfied with the labels, but maintains an impartial point of view with respect to the realities behind them," for the critic comes to believe that the hard won victories of the 1930s had again become imperiled, this time thanks to the new strictures of Cold War mentality (61).

It is has been previously suggested that the cultural radicalism of the interwar period primarily distinguishes itself from the literary radicalism of the 1870s and 80s in its relationship to the politics of social class and of class struggle. In this respect, it must be observed that the particular *kulturkamp* inaugurated and initially directed by Brandes must be properly understood as a kind of *bourgeois intramural conflict*.[14] It must certainly be conceded that many of the literary radicals were indeed in sympathy with the emerging European labor movement; most prominent here would be Holger Drachmann, whose 1872 debut collection of poems is run through with tributes to the fallen Communards of Paris. And it should also be recalled that Brandesian "ideal liberalism" did, at least in theory, seek a reassertion of the revolutionary and collectivist "humane" liberal tradition of Rousseau over against the increasingly unforgiving individualist liberalism of the Far Right *provisorialregering* of J.B.S. Estrup.[15] And yet the particular fights that the radicals picked with the *enhedskultur* were by and large those concerning what Isaiah Berlin, working within the liberal tradition, famously termed *negative liberty*. Negative liberty is defined by Berlin as, in its essence, "liberty *from*," namely from the unjust intrusion by established structures of authority into the inviolate and sacred private domain of the human

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[14] The author is indebted for this phrase to Franco Moretti, who notes in his 2010 essay on Ibsen that the central conflict of concern to the playwright "is not that between the bourgeoisie and another class, but that internal to the bourgeoisie itself," namely "intra-bourgeois competition as a mortal combat" (118).

[15] Denmark's experiment in limited constitutional government took a serious blow in 1877, when the *Højre* government of J.B.S. Estrup began to issue "provisional" budget bills over the objections of the majority *Venstre* party, invoking an "emergency" clause in the constitution of 1849 as justification. After a major confrontation in 1885 resulted in a triumph for Estrup, the practice was effectively formalized; ten years of de facto rule by fiat ensued, a period now referred to as *Provisorietiden* [The Time of the Provisional Government]. For more on this see Hvidt 283-98.

individual.[16] In contemporary American discourse this sphere has come to be referred to realm of "social issues," prominent among them things like the right of the individual not to be prevented from obtaining an abortion or, on the other side of the political spectrum, from carrying an automatic weapon into Sunday church service. In the radical Denmark of the 1870s they included matters such as freedom of conscience (although it was the right to non-belief that most concerned the radicals; Jens Peter Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne* of 1880 [originally entitled *The Atheist*] ranks as the most important contribution here), the freedom of sexual association (Bjørnson's *En Handske* [*A Gauntlet*, 1883] and the mercurial debate it engendered are central here), and, by far and away the most important, the manifold of issues surrounding what was referred to at the time as the *kvindesporgsmål* [the Woman Question], most famously in Ibsen's *Et Dukkehjem* [*A Doll's House,* 1879] as well as in countless other works such as Victoria Benedictsson's *Pengar* [*Money,* 1885.][17] Literary radicalism should thus be understood as in its essence an *emancipatory project*, but one in which the rights of the *single human individual* are paramount; Brandes, inspired

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[16] Berlin contrasts the aim of *negative* liberty as "the 'negative' goal of warding off interference," e.g. "freedom from," to that of liberty in its *positive* sense, which is defined as the "freedom to," namely *to* a certain degree of self-rule on the part of the human individual, or, really more pertinently here, a *group* of individuals (20). The desire for negative liberty, which must not be confused with the categorically distinct aspiration to participatory democracy, belongs to the British tradition of *individualist* liberalism, from Hobbes through Locke to Smith and to Mill and, finally, to Berlin himself. The desire for positive liberty, a much older concept within Western thought, finds its first modern outbreak in the collectivist *humane* liberalism of Rousseau.

[17] See Pjetursson 16-20 for a concise summary of the central issues addressed by literary radicalism. The critic does cite one significant exception to this general rule, namely the Norwegian author Alexander Kielland's *Garmann og Worse* (1880), a precursor of the new genre of the *collective novel* that would reach its aesthetic apex in the 1920s and 30s in the work of the cultural radical Hans Kirk. Kirk shall receive comprehensive treatment in a forthcoming chapter.

by Byronic Romanticism's concept of the expansive self, seems to have shared Mill's profound sense that "all the errors which a man is likely to commit against advice and warning are far outweighed by the evil of allowing others to constrain him to what they deem as good" (207). Radicalism thus above all, as Fjord Jensen has asserted, claimed the right of the single human individual "to realize himself in a freer and more honest personal life in defiance of conventions and institutions" (14). As such radical critique "held up an image of the ideal human being, the proud, freeborn individual" but much less so that of an "ideal society" (15). Its central preoccupation shall therefore be termed that of *individual emancipation*.

The crucial distinction to make here is that while the radical project of individual emancipation did indeed seek to undermine particular institutions of the *enhedskultur*, for the most part those of the National Church and of the patriarchy, it did not in any serious manner question the ultimate bulwark of liberal bourgeois society, namely that of capitalism and of the inherently unequal and exploitative relation between capital and labor. What literary radicalism (again, by and large) lacked, then, was a sense of the other component of the emancipatory project, namely that of *class emancipation*; this concept as employed in this study is indebted to Marx's loosely correlating notion of social emancipation, introduced in the 1843 essay "On the Jewish Question," and shall be more comprehensively defined later in the current chapter.[18] For present purposes, it need only

[18] In the 1843 essay, Marx draws a crucial distinction between what he terms mere "political emancipation" and the far more ambitious aim of "social" or even "human" emancipation. Political emancipation is the process involved in the transition from feudalism to liberal and constitutional rule, in which all members of a society are granted

be noted here that the project of class emancipation *does indeed* question the economic basis of liberal bourgeois civilization, for it is presupposed that it in a "capitalist state of nature" there exists an essential *inequity* between capital and labor, and that the working class must therefore struggle to emancipate itself from this inherently exploitative relation through *acquiring a measure of control over its material existence*, whether it be partial or

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the full slate of both negative and positive liberties; the particular occasion for the 1843 essay is the issue of granting such to the Jews of Prussia, who had of course historically been denied them. While political emancipation does indeed represent "a great progress" (35) over feudalism, it is for Marx by no means the end all of the emancipatory project, for it leaves in tact the distinction between man as an *abstract citizen* of the "political community," in which he is the equal of any other, and man as an *egoistic individual* of "civil society," in which he "treats other men as a means, degrades himself to the role of a mere means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers" (34). Social or human emancipation, in contrast, demands the far more ambitious aim of abolishing this distinction as in "when the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life and work, and in his relationships, he has become *species-being*; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers (*forces propres*) as social powers so that he no longer separates this *social* power from himself as *political* power" (46). The 1843 essay, for all of its appalling anti-Semitism, remains of immense significance today, for it is deeply representative of what has come to be called the "early" or "humanist" Marx, to which latter day Marxists have increasingly turned after the failure of so many of the prognostications of "scientific socialism" failed to materialize. Of particular interest to the present study is Marx's seeming appeal to the language of *ethics,* specifically those of Kant, in the sense that liberal capitalist society is fundamentally wrong in that capital treats labor as a means rather than as an end. This aspect of Marx's thinking would later be picked up on by the Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism, which in many ways would serve as the philosophical basis of cultural radicalism, particularly in the work of Otto Gelsted. Marx's idea of social emancipation has enjoyed an extraordinarily long life and remains to this day a central category of the social sciences. For the present study, the author has chosen to forgo Marx's language in favor of the concepts of "individual" and "class" emancipation, in part to avoid unnecessary entanglements in debates of little relevance, but even more so because these terms more accurately reflect the central distinction at work here, namely between that aspect of the emancipatory project that in its essence does not question the unequal relation between capital and labor, and that which does.

complete, whether it be obtained through gradualist parliamentary methods or by virtue of the revolutionary seizure of the means of production. A certain degree of this blind spot within radicalism may indeed be attributed to the relatively tardy arrival of industrial capitalism in Denmark, which would remain well into the 20th century a predominantly agrarian economy, but making light of the radicals disinterest in the project of class emancipation is by no means to commit the fallacy of historical anachronism. The year 1871, after all, is not only set apart in Danish history as the year in which Brandes launched the Modern Breakthrough; it was also in the spring of that year that the Communard-inspired postal worker Louis Pio would found Denmark's first socialist newspaper; in October, just weeks before Brandes' famous lecture, Pio would proceed to establish the Danish chapter of the International Workingman's Association, which would call its first strike the following year (Hvidt 223). The Social Democratic party he helped to found, after enduring years of repression from the *Højre* government, would score its first mandates in the elections of 1884, after which the party would play an increasingly significant role in the eventual transition to full parliamentary democracy in 1904 and, of course, ultimately become the dominant Danish political party of the 20th century. While there was indeed, as has been suggested, some degree of overlap between the radical and socialist movements of this period, it must be understood that, as Pjetursson has observed, there existed an irremediable gulf between the "high idealism" of Brandesianism and the "materialist philosophy" of the emerging labor movement (20).

Nowhere is the essentially bourgeois nature of Brandes' literary radicalism more evident than in the work of the most celebrated of his progeny; indeed, Henrik Ibsen should

not only be viewed as the most famous and best remembered of the "Men of the Modern Breakthrough," but also, arguably, the single figure who most clearly manifests the central ethos of the movement; not, of course, in the sense of the slavish application of a programmatic set of principles (we are, after all, speaking of Ibsen here!), but instead in the sense that is in Ibsen that the essence of radicalism achieves its most fully-formed iteration, with all of its inner tensions and contradictions made explicit. In his recent essay on "Ibsen and the Spirit of Capitalism," Franco Moretti has likened the playwright's grand cycle of twelve to a kind of twenty-year-long "settling of accounts" with the bourgeoisie, but an exercise in which, in spite of the fact that it is precisely in the years of the cycle in which "trade unions, socialist parties and anarchism are changing the face of European politics," there are "no workers in the experiment."[19] When Ibsen engages with capitalism, as he indeed often does in the cycle, his principal concern is not with the struggle of proletarian and bourgeois, but instead with a conflict "internal to the bourgeoisie itself," namely that of "intra-bourgeois competition as a mortal combat" (118). Moretti points out that no less than one third of the cycle's texts—*Samfundets støtter* [*The Pillars of Society*, 1877] as well as *Bygmester Solness* [*The Master Builder*, 1892], *Johan Gabriel Borkman* (1896) and, perhaps most of all, *Vildanden* [*The Wild Duck,* 1884]— essentially share the same prehistory; two business partners, the one of which, to employ an idiom popularized on the Wall Street of the previous decade, has at some point in the past "ripped the fucking face

[19] Moretti does mention the fact that the very first play of the cycle, *The Pillars of Society*, indeed begins with a meeting between a union man and management, and that this conflict does play an important role in the unfolding plot of the drama, but after this initial flirtation "the conflict between labor and capital disappears from Ibsen's world" (118).

off" of the other. The critic further observes, with a considerable degree of appropriate contempt, that whereas the aristocracy traditionally claimed as its central value that of *honor*, the bourgeoisie has always grounded its self-justification in the concept of *honesty*, noting how in Deirdre McCloskey's "600-page extravaganza on *Bourgeois Virtues* . . . the apex are the pages on honesty" (120). And yet capitalism in praxis has always, Moretti asserts, depended upon behavior that is fundamentally *dishonest*, activity that while *strictly speaking* is not in violation of the law and yet so inherently repugnant that even the smallest child is capable of grasping its essential immorality; Moretti refers to this sphere of activity as capitalism's "grey area."[20]

With this in mind it becomes clear that Ibsen's critique of capitalism is in its essence subordinate to the larger critique of the *façade morality* of bourgeois civilization. This is arguably most clearly evident in the aforementioned *Wild Duck,* which, in spite of all of its inbuilt ambiguity, could very well be qualified as a kind of *hate letter* to the bourgeoisie. Old Werle has of course in the past defrauded his business partner Old Ekdal, resulting in his absolute ruination; he is furthermore secretly the father of the child of Old Ekdal's son Hjalmar, whom he has set up in business as a photographer in an effort to cover up his past transgressions; the miserable Ekdal home thus constitutes a kind of grotesque caricature of patriarchal bourgeois sobriety and stability and comfort, built up entirely upon lies, everybody in on the joke except of course the patriarch himself. Into this den of dishonesty

[20] As an example of the functioning of the grey area within contemporary capitalism Moretti cites the case of Enron 's Kenneth Lay, against whom the liberal state proved incapable of filing *criminal* charges. Lay was, however, formally charged in *civil* court; hence the grey area appears to be formally inscribed within American jurisprudence itself, in the gap between the criminal and the civil (119-20)

arrives Old Werle's son Gregers, returned from many years "up North" at the family business in Høydal. Almost immediately discerning the true nature of what has transpired back home, Gregers, himself a kind of parodic representation of a Brandesian radical, determines to expose the truth, even explicitly employing the language of radicalism in his insistence that once the lies have been exposed, Hjalmar and Gina may be free "to lay the foundation of a true marriage" based on mutual respect and understanding (185). In this effort he is opposed, unsuccessfully of course, by Dr. Relling, himself a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of the façade morality, who insists contrary to Greger's cloudy conception of *den ideale fordring* [the claim of the ideal] that human existence under present conditions may only be made bearable by careful maintenance of the *livsløgn* [life-lie]: "Take the life-lie away from the average man and straight away you take away his happiness" (205). In the century and a quarter since the play's appearance, much critical effort has been expended in the effort to pin down exactly what Gregers means by "the claim of the ideal," and the precise answer to his question remains outside the scope of the present study; but it is permissible to identify that which the claim of the ideal does *not* entail, namely any sort of activity related to *labor organizing*. The contemporary reader could be forgiven for suspecting as much, as Old Werle does note that Gregers has insisted on "slaving away like an ordinary clerk and not taking a penny more than the standard wage" (125), and Relling, even more suggestively, specifically chastises Gregers for having gone "the rounds of all the labourer's cottages serving up what he called 'the claim of the ideal'" (169). And it must also be recalled here, as Scott de Francesco notes, that the northern "new towns" in which Norway's particular form of industrialization took place were the very scenes of the most

intense conflict between labor and capital in all of Scandinavia, a struggle that was very much underway by the 1870s and 80s (27). And yet Gregers, like Ibsen himself, remains overwhelmingly preoccupied with the iniquities that have taken place back home within the bourgeois drawing room; it is clear from the text that he has little concern for the larger question: if Old Werle's fundamental mendacity is such that he is capable of perpetrating such crimes upon the Ekdals, by every measure once his social equal, then what is he capable of inflicting upon his workers, at this early stage in capitalism entirely bereft of any means of resisting their exploitation? And, moreover, what of the *system* which permits such fundamental inequities? We shall shortly see that the single most decisive factor that separates Brandesian literary radicalism from the cultural radicalism of the interwar period is that the cultural radicals *attempt to break out of the bourgeois parlor*; the question of whether or not they in fact succeed in this effort is significant and shall shortly be addressed. For present purposes, it need only be observed here that in aligning themselves with the emergent labor movement they at the very least to some degree commit themselves to *the other side* of the emancipatory project, namely that of *class* emancipation, an enterprise that Brandes, as has been indicated, never really took seriously and in which he lost all interest after Nietzsche.

The year 1888 marks another turning point in the literatures of Norden, for it was in August of that year that the critic Valdemar Vedel would publish in the journal *Ny Jord* his seminal essay "Om moderne digtning" ["On Modern Poetry"], an epoch-changing text on the order of Brandes' famous lecture of November 1871. Employing the same kind of dialectical logic as Brandes had, Vedel asserts that the radical struggle had effectively been

"carried over into the domain of politics;" radicalism's *literary* component, formerly the movement's *avant garde*, was "no longer in a close relation to the intellectual struggles of the age" (157). Literary radicalism had effectively abdicated its leading role in the radical project; in its gradual decline from the high-minded *problemlitteratur* of Ibsen and Bjørnson into the vulgar *tendenslitteratur* (propaganda literature) characteristic of the late 1880s, it had reduced its status to that of a mere "referential realism" (157). Vedel would not have to wait long for a response to his call for a new literature turned inward toward "the peculiar tempo and the peculiar melody of the modern life of the nerves" (163), for as Busk-Jensen observes, it was only three months later that *Ny Jord* would publish the first excerpt of Knut Hamsun's monumental novel *Sult* [*Hunger,* 1890], the central work that would launch what the Norwegians would come to call Neo-Romanticism and what in Denmark is now known as *Det Sjælelige Gennembrud* [The Breakthrough of the Soul] (Mortensen and Schack 3: 64). Norden's literatures in the 1890s and into the new century would thus be characterized by a general turn toward the exploration of individual interiority; this is the age of Strindberg's post-Inferno Expressionist dramas, of Johannes V. Jensen's *fin de siècle* masterpiece *Kongens Fald* [*The Fall of the King*, 1900-1] and of course of Hamsun's great early Modernist trilogy, *Hunger* as well as *Mysterier* [*Mysteries*, 1892] and *Pan* (1894). Paradoxically enough, it is arguably *these* works, rather than those of the Modern Breakthrough, that would exert the most far-reaching influence on the literary Modernism soon to break out in Europe's major literary powers. Thus it is the *reaction* to Brandes' Modern Breakthrough, rather than Modern Breakthrough itself, that would seem

to have left the most lasting mark on world literature, a kind of Hegelian irony that could not have been unapparent to the critic himself.

As Vedel had suggested, the radical struggle for the emancipation of the individual as well as, increasingly in the years leading up to the *systemskift* of 1904, full parliamentary democracy (Marx's concept of *political* emancipation) by no means came to an end in the gradual petering out of literary radicalism; instead the radical project was increasingly conducted directly within the *political* system. As the contemporary scholar of cultural radicalism Morten Thing has observed, the radical movement inaugurated in the 1870s seems to have from very early on pursued a strategy of *infiltration*, its members seeking not only elective office but also appointment within the institutions of power; this is in sharp contrast to the cultural radicals of the interwar period, who always remain careful to maintain a certain distance from electoral and institutional politics ("Kulturradikalismen" 116). The key figures in this strategy were Georg Brandes' more politically minded brother Edvard as well as the editor and politician Viggo Hørup, who in the late 1870s and onward would lead the minority radical faction (known at the time as the "Europeans") of the Venstre party, as opposed to the dominant "Danish" or "Moderate" Venstre wing.[21] The increasingly authoritarian behavior of the Højre-led *provisorialregering* of J.B.S. Estrup would in the 1880s and 90s lead to ever rising tension between the radicals, who urged

[21] It is absolutely crucial to understand here that the Danish Venstre party of the late 19th century did not represent the interests of what we now commonly associate with a party of the "Left," namely the industrial proletariat, which was only then coming into being in late-industrializing Scandinavia. Its base was instead to be located in the rural smallholders, its general intellectual orientation not in the emerging European doctrines of socialism but in the thought of the early 19th century Danish theologian N.F.S. Grundtvig.

non-cooperation with the *provisorium*, and the collaborationist moderates. Hørup and Edvard Brandes would take important measures in establishing the autonomy of the radical wing in the founding of the faction's own youth organization in 1883, the Studentersamfund, and in 1884 its own newspaper, *Politiken* (Pjetursson 16). After the *systemskift* of 1904 the two wings would forever part ways, Brandes and Hørup establishing the new Radikale Venstre party, which as has been said has historically tended to caucus with the Left, while the moderates would continue on as the Venstre, which remains to this day, in spite of its name, the leading party of the Right. While the transition from literary to political radicalism would result in significant successes for the movement—the Radikale Venstre would capture the government in the years 1909 and 1910 as well as from 1913 through 1920—, these victories were ultimately, as is always the case when a movement for social change that initially sets itself up in absolute opposition to all established structures of authority eventually enters into those very same corridors of power, purchased at a considerable price. As Pjetursson has observed, the essential "combative spirit" of political radicalism quickly gave way to the practical demands of compromise; this was evident both in *Politiken*, which under new editorship after the turn of the century began to move in a more "reader-friendly" direction, as well as the in the Radikale Venstre itself, which after the *systemskift* became just one more party in competition for voters with all others (16).

With respect to Georg Brandes himself, his disillusionment with the failures of political radicalism to resist the *provisorialregering*, the effective stifling of the radical project *in praxis*, together with his encounter with Nietzsche at the end of the 1880s, would

as is well known lead him to largely abandon politics, a distance he would maintain, with the exception of his tireless activity on behalf of the political emancipation of what he called *undertrykte folkeslag* [oppressed peoples, for Brandes national minority groups, stateless peoples, the colonized], until his death in 1927. This second phase of the critic's career is now appropriately referred to as that of *aristocratic* radicalism; its origin may precisely be dated to November 26, 1887, when Brandes wrote Nietzsche for the first time, to acknowledge the receipt of *Human, All Too Human* and *The Genealogy of Morals*. Of these works Brandes notes that "there is a great deal . . . with which my own views are in sympathy, such as the understanding of ascetic ideals, the deeply-rooted aversion to democratic mediocrity, and your aristocratic radicalism" (Asmundsson 234-5). Brandes would proceed to deliver a series of five lectures on Nietzsche in Copenhagen in the spring of 1888, before publishing in the following year a comprehensive survey of his new thinking on the philosopher in the journal *Tilskueren* (Mortensen and Shack 3: 59). Brandes' doctrine of aristocratic radicalism has been the subject of considerable scholarship, and commentary here must necessarily be limited to only that aspect most pertinent to the project at hand.[22] For present purposes, suffice it to say that Nietzsche's concept of the *übermensch* (it is worth noting here that Brandes never employs the direct Danish translation of the German, instead opting for the notion of the *stormenneske* [great man]) seems to have confirmed in the critic's thinking a long held suspicion of the *mob*; indeed, as Pjetursson has noted, this sense of dread stretches all the way back to the Paris Commune, which Brandes had denigrated as "riotous and instinctual" (20). From this point

[22] For an extensive bibliography on Brandes-Nietzsche scholarship, see Fambrini 202.

forward, Brandes appears to have renounced whatever interest he had ever maintained in the larger project of class emancipation, instead restricting himself to an increasingly anti-democratic defense of the negative liberty of the individual. Politically speaking, Nietzsche seems to have driven Brandes further into the embrace of Mill at his most unforgiving moments, specifically with the philosopher's reflexive sense that "the initiation of all wise or noble things comes and must come from individuals; generally at first from some one individual" (196). Liberty therefore has far more to fear from the tyranny of the majority than from the tyranny of the one or the few, and the principal task of society is thus to be located less in insuring that all members of society have a proper say in their own governance than in preserving "an atmosphere of freedom" in which genius may "breathe freely" (194). The remainder of Brandes' career as critic, accordingly, would thus be devoted to monographs on a long series of history's *stormennesker*, among them Shakespeare (1895-6), Heine (1897), Ibsen (1898), Goethe (1915), Voltaire (1916), Caesar (1918), and, finally, Michelangelo (1921).

Perhaps no single factor has served to distinguish 20th century Nordic cultural evolution from that of Europe than the fact that the Scandinavians were spared the experience of the vast industrial slaughterhouse that was the First World War. There was nothing entirely new in this rather happy turn of fate, for as is well known the geographic isolation of Scandinavia had long helped to insulate the region from the worst effects of the periodic outbreaks of mass killing that have so darkened European modernity. Brandes' lecture of November 1871, curiously enough, can be viewed as a kind of illustration of the

downside of Norden's geographic isolation; because Scandinavia, once again, had never really been "in on the action" of world history, it was thus also characterized by relative *intellectual* isolation, in which the always tardy, always piecemeal appropriation of European thinking invariably "sided with the reaction" (15). The Modern Breakthrough he inaugurated had been, above all, an effort to break out of this fundamentally retarded relation to European thought, to bring the Nordic lands into alignment with the general spirit of optimism and progress that had, at least for Brandes, defined European intellectual history since the 18th century. And while matters may not have turned out precisely as he intended, the efforts of Brandes, however indirectly, did ultimately result in securing for the Scandinavians, at least for a time, a seat at the grownups' table among Europe's major literary powers. Bradbury and McFarlane's seminal survey of literary Modernism, which has done so much to restore the long neglected role of Scandinavia in the birth of that movement, indicates that within the Germanic world it was the appearance in 1883 of *The Men of the Modern Breakthrough* more than any other single event that served to make the epithet of the "modern" into "a rallying slogan of quite irresistible drawing power" (37); McFarlane further notes that Brandes' 1888 lectures on Nietzsche, which were quickly disseminated thanks to the efforts of the Scandinavian colony in Berlin, would serve to ignite the Modernist movement in Germany and Austria, just as his November 1871 lecture had launched the Modern Breakthrough back home a generation earlier (79). The treatment of the movement's early phase in *Modernism: 1890-1930* is thus appropriately littered with the names of Nordic authors, but beginning in the second decade of the new

century, the Scandinavians curiously begin to recede from the picture.[23] Contemporary literary historians of Norden, in fact, generally delay the full consolidation of Modernist aesthetics to the period *after the Second World War*, and indeed the category has never occupied the position of absolute dominance that is has in the literary histories of France, Germany, England, and the United States.[24] Hence the essential paradox of Nordic Modernism: the Scandinavians are there at the very beginning, their role in erecting the foundations of the movement could even be said to be, at least according to the most aggressively revanchist accounts, *sine qua non*, and yet they effectively fail to show up for the climax of the grand banquet of global Modernism, instead only returning decades later, after much of the rest of the world, and most certainly Europe's major literary powers, have moved on.

What then explains this curiously "abortive" nature of Nordic Modernism? Such an expansive question may of course never be answered entirely satisfactorily, and yet it is difficult not to identify as the principal cause anything other than the fact that the Nordic

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[23] See in particular here McFarlane's chapter on "The Mind of Modernism" (71-93) as well as the chronology of Modernist works in the appendix.

[24] While the authors of the Nebraska series on Scandinavian literary history all make note of important earlier exceptions, their particular chronologies depart dramatically from that of Bradbury and McFarlane. Susan Brantly (Warme 364-79) dates Sweden's "Modernist Breakthrough" to the 1940s, while Poul Houe (Rossel 306-29) places the consolidation of Modernism in Denmark in the early 1960s. Jan Sjåvik (Næss 306-29), furthermore, notes that the Norwegian *Profil* group of the 1960s claimed as an essential part of its mandate the promotion of Modernist aesthetics in Norway; Markku Envall (Schoolfield 176-80), finally, situates the outbreak of Modernism in the Finnish language in the 1950s and 1960s. Only among the Swedish-speaking minority of Finland (Schoolfield 453-8) do the Scandinavians appear to have been chronologically attuned to the Modernist movement of Europe's major literary powers in the years after the war, and for present purposes it must be recalled here that the dominant figure of that period, Edith Södergran, was possessed of a far more intimate relationship with the cataclysm of 1914-18 than her cousins to the West.

countries, whether by virtue of geographical or historical accident or some more active form of agency, did not send their sons into the Guns of August. The planetary phenomenon that was literary Modernism has of course been dissected and charted, and re-dissected and re-charted, from an untold number of perspectives and angles, and yet it is likely permissible to identify a certain measure of general agreement that the specifically *aesthetic* origins of the movement are at the very least bound up with the twin crises of language and of representation that began to complicate aesthetic production at the conclusion of the 19th century. In this broad development the Scandinavians were by all means entirely on board, even for a brief moment playing a leading role. In the outbreak of the Great War, however, the aesthetic crisis of Modernism seems to have scaled up dramatically into something much larger, something that may be properly referred to as a general *civilizational* crisis. Already before 1914 the fundamental presuppositions of the Century of Progress had suffered serious blows; Freud of course had opened up a gaping hole in the Enlightenment conception of the sovereign subject and the overly simplistic 19th century psychology that had followed in its wake, while in sociology Durkheim and Mauss were beginning to teach Europe the long overdue lesson that its particular way of life was anything but universalist, and moreover that the indigenous life-ways of the manifold of peoples they had colonized were in no manner inherently "defective," but in contrast constituted wholly rational and effective means of social organization. And then the war broke out, and suddenly it was abundantly and painfully apparent that not only was European civilization not innately superior to all others, but that there was something essentially *wrong* with it. That European civilization lay in ruins was abundantly clear to

anyone with eyes to see; indeed, this is made clear in the very signal text of literary Modernism. But this is not to say that Eliot's "Wasteland" in particular and in general the Modernist sensibility it has come to represent are in their very essences *pessimistic*. Eliot of course saw the possibility of "shoring up" all those fragments into something entirely new, and planetary Modernism is by all accounts far too diffuse and incoherent to pin down into such absolute binary distinctions. But *it is* safe to assert that after the war hardly anyone in the belligerent countries was capable of upholding the kind of absolute faith in the essentially progressive nature of European civilization that had animated the ten volumes of Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy* (1862-96). If the early 20th century could be said to have produced a similar effort at grand synthesis, no better correlate could be identified than the twin volumes of Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, which appropriately appeared in the years immediately following the war.

This is admittedly to engage in literary historical speculation on a rather breathtaking scale, with all of the inbuilt perils such an enterprise naturally contains; and yet it is abundantly clear that the Scandinavians, who largely due to the efforts of Brandes and his radical progeny had for a time finally managed to fall in line with the cultural evolution of Europe's larger lands, effectively part ways once again in the years after the war.[25] That Norden resisted the strain of profound *kulturpessimismus* that began to affect

[25] Carl Erik Bay notes the significance of Norden's non-participation in the war, in that social conditions in postwar Denmark were far from as "aggravated and chaotic as in the belligerent countries" ("Kant" 251), and that this relative stability was essential in allowing for "radicalism's renewal" ("Kant" 252). Peter Madsen (312-17), furthermore, demonstrates that the post-World War I civilizational crisis in Europe's larger lands would effectively be delayed in Denmark until after the Second World War, when the early 1950s

Europe during the high tide of Modernism may largely be attributed to the activities of the movement that Bredsdorff would later term cultural radicalism, which begins gradually to crystallize in Denmark in the middle of the 1920s.[26] Of particular utility here is Fjord Jensen's designation of cultural radicalism as a kind of Danish Third Enlightenment, an almost heroic reassertion of the 18th century ideals of progress and of optimism that had seemingly all but perished on the blood banks of the Somme and in the death dungeons beneath Verdun (38). Klaus Rifbjerg has expanded on this by describing how the cultural radicals attempt to recapture the spirit not of the increasingly antagonistic "aristocratic radicalism" of post-Nietzsche Brandes, but the young Brandes of literary radicalism, the Brandes of social commitment and most of all of stubborn and youthful optimism, for one simply "cannot be a cultural radical and cultural pessimist at the same time" (10).

In its broadest sense, the movement should be understood as "a philosophy of reason," rooted in the present and absolutely opposed to any "form of obscurantism" or "metaphysical belief in eternity" (11); above all cultural radicalism is animated by a "faith in light" (10). The cultural radicals as bringers of light; Rifbjerg could not have chosen a more apt metaphor, for as is well known Poul Henningsen was in fact a *literal* bringer of

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Heretica-circle of Martin A. Hansen, Jens Kruse and Ole Wivel would begin to develop a critique of the Enlightenment closely approximating that of Adorno and Horkheimer. Hansen and his associates, importantly, specifically implicated the cultural radical movement in the long historical process that resulted in the catastrophe of 1939-45; Bredsdorff's essay of 1955 is thus in this sense a response to the *Heretica* critique.

[26] It should be observed here that freethinking/cultural radicalism is in part to be distinguished from the earlier Brandesian radicalism in that no single text or event announced its arrival, and that no single figure so thoroughly dominated its unfolding.

light, having earned his fortune as a designer of lamps.[27] Thus in some ways Brandes' grand dream of a half-century before, that of a Norden fully attuned to the progressive spirit of European thinking and history, could be said in the long run to have exceeded beyond his wildest expectations, for the Danish reaction to the conflagration of 1914-18 would prove to be relatively muted and brief.

Even though the Nordic countries had managed to stay out of the war, it was everywhere apparent that the new social world beginning to emerge in the years after 1918 *had* changed; indeed, in many ways it was *unrecognizable* from that of the recently concluded Long 19th Century. With respect to economics, the war had in fact been an enormous boon to Denmark and indeed to much of Scandinavia.[28] These were the heady Goulash Times, which had witnessed nearly overnight the creation of vast new fortunes due to the all but unlimited demand for shipping and most of all for Denmark's agricultural products; the reckless activities of the new Goulash Barons had, in fact, achieved in just a few years what the radical movement had been unable to do over the course of decades, effectively breaking the back of the *enhedskultur* by undermining the kind of "responsible" capitalism that had underpinned its authority since the triumph of the National Liberal movement in 1849. Niels Finn Christiansen notes that the number of meat processing plants in Denmark grew from the pre-war figure of 21 to 148, and that meat exports

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[27] For a comprehensive treatment of Henningsen as *lystkunstner* [artist of light], see Søren Nagbol's "PH og Lyset."

[28] No more memorable commentary on the bubble of the war years may be located than that in the Icelandic author Halldór Laxness' *Independent People* (1946), the narrator of which not only views the war as "perhaps the most bountiful blessing that God has sent our country since the Napoleonic Wars," but also offers up a solemn prayer that "the Almighty grant us another equally as beautiful at the earliest possible moment" (373).

increased during the war by more than a factor of fifty (242), but the real money, as is seemingly always the case, was to be made in speculation on the stock exchange, which was no longer the exclusive preserve of the monocled and top-hatted gentleman of the *enhedskultur*, but now open to all sorts of rabble, more or less anyone "who could get together a couple hundred crowns," in the words of one the bubble's many victims (243). The orgy of overproduction and over-speculation would, as again is always inevitable, come to a rather abrupt halt upon the conclusion of the war, resulting in a series of crises culminating in the 1922 collapse of the Landmandsbank, Scandinavia's largest (Finn Christiansen 328). Thus Denmark could be said, in the larger scheme of things, to have been rather unhappily ahead of the curve with respect to the worldwide crash of 1929; while the Danish economy had returned to prewar levels by the mid 1920s, these gains, as Olav Harsløf has noted, came almost entirely at the expense of labor, unemployment doubling from 11% in 1924 to 22% in 1927 (32). Of the two billion crowns (according to the currency value of the period) in profits cleared by Denmark during the war, almost all of it all remained in the hands of capital, the orthodox liberal Venstre-government of 1920-24 having effectively prevented any meaningful measure of redistribution (Harsløf 30). For the large majority of Danes, then, the 1920s could hardly be said to have roared.

While the cultural authority of the *enhedskultur* was indeed irreparably damaged by the collapse of its economic base at the hands of the Goulash Apaches, its shattered remnants would gather their forces in 1923 to stage a kind of counteroffensive in what would come to be called the *livsanskuelsesdebat* [life- or better world-view debate, as in German *weltanschaung*], which should be understood here as Denmark's only meaningful

participation in the post-war European civilizational crisis of values. This complex and highly nuanced debate would last for several years, drawing in not only the hardened veterans of the prewar radical *kulturkamp*, but also members of the clerical and scientific professions; in its essence the *livsanskuelsesdebat* turned on the fact that the 19th century positivist faith in civilizational progress had resulted not in a new dawning of human well-being but in the horrors of the Great War. As Søren Schou has described, the adherents of the "anti-modern" or "religious" side seized on recent developments in the natural sciences, most prominently the genetic discoveries of Mendel and de Vries which had for a time thrown a wrench into the momentum of Darwinism, to assert that scientific civilization had led to a "spiritual and moral collapse," which could only be remedied by a general revival of "popular religiosity;" for the Symbolist poet Helge Rode this meant the kind of syncretic experimentation evidenced in the growing Spiritist movement, while for the arch-conservative critic Henning Kehler a return to a re-invigorated National Church (Mortensen and Schack 4: 43, 45). Over on the "biological" side, the physician Oluf Thomsen rather tentatively made the case for positivism, in effect attempting to rescue Darwin himself from the increasingly rapacious clutches of the Social Darwinists (Harsløf 62), an effort seconded by the aformentioned Johannes V. Jensen (Mortensen and Schack 4: 43-4). But it must be remembered here, once again, that the war had *not* come to Denmark, and thus the kind of Spenglerian *kulturpessimismus* that Rode and Kehler sought to sow never really found much in the way of arable soil. The *livsanskuelsesdebat* had in fact always been, in the memorable words of Harsløf, an "old man's debate" more properly belonging to the 19th century, a kind of last stand of a hobbled and decrepit ruling class that

long before had used up its historical utility (61). And thus it was only appropriate that it was none other than the grand old radical Brandes himself, still kicking in his ninth decade, who would rather unceremoniously conclude the debate; his final three volumes—*Sagnet om Jesus* [*The Case of Jesus*, 1925], *Petrus* (1926) and *Urkristendom* (1927)—, polemical exercises in Feuerbachian myth-debunking, effectively exposed the debate as less about being "for or against Darwin—but for or against *thinking*" (Harsløf 63).

As has been suggested, it is in the middle of the 1920s, precisely around the time that the *livsanskuelsesdebat* was fizzling out, that the movement later termed cultural radicalism begins to take form, although there is some disagreement on this among historians.[29] The figures who would come to dominate the new movement understandably had steered clear of the "old man's debate," the single exception being Otto Gelsted's essay "Om Livsanskuelse" in the inaugural issue of *Sirius*, the journal he edited from 1924 through 1925. Here is something entirely new in this "old man's debate," for the classicist and poet Gelsted, who would serve as cultural radicalism's principal philosopher and ethicist, argues for a "third standpoint," grounded in the Neo-Kantian idealist philosophy of the Marburg School and its founder, Hermann Cohen. But there is also novelty in Gelsted's choice of venue. While the literary radical movement did indeed produce its own journals (foremost among them the Brandes brothers' *Det nittende Aarhundrede*), it had primarily

[29] Bredsdorff, too young to have participated in cultural radical activity in the 1920s, thus in the aforementioned 1955 essay identifies cultural radicalism as largely a phenomenon of the 1930s, arising as a response to Hitler and Franco. Fjord Jensen, who came of age after the Second World War, supports Bredsdorff's characterization of cultural radicalism as an essentially reactive movement, by way of Toynbee (27). Almost all later historians of the movement, however, push back the origins to the mid-1920s; see for example Harsløf, Bjarke Jensen, Andersen et al., and Pjetursson.

staged its struggle in the novel/ short story and in the stage play, as well as to a considerable extent in the daily newspaper (principally Edvard Brandes' *Politiken*). The cultural production of the cultural radicals, in sharp contrast, is by no means so narrowly confined; indeed, the movement would take its initial cues from painting (important here is the journal *Klingen*, published by Henningsen and Gelsted among others from 1917-1920), and would in fact find its precise origins in architecture (of crucial importance here is Henningsen's *Kritisk Revy* of 1926-1928). And while the collective novels of Hans Kirk stand out as perhaps the crowning aesthetic achievements of the movement, the popular songs and revues of Henningsen the polymath are of no less significance. For such a widely diffuse collection of activities, then, it is only appropriate that the life-blood of the movement is to be found *in the journals*, which served not only as gathering points for sympathetic-minded intellectuals, but also as the primary venue for the movement's signature form of cultural production, namely that of *kulturkritik*.[30]

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[30] While there is general consensus that cultural radicalism is principally a creature of the journals, there is considerable disagreement as to which of the interwar Left-oriented publications may properly be said to belong to cultural radicalism. Helen Andersen and her co-authors, whose study is limited to the 1920s, distinguish between the properly cultural radical journals *Klingen* and *Kritisk Revy*, which aimed for a "classless art," and the cultural radical-influenced *Clarté* (1926-27) and *Monde* (1928-31), which favored an expressly political "class struggle art" (13). Harsløf, who also is primarily concerned with the 1920s, distinguishes between the explicitly radical and the explicitly socialist journals of the decade; to the former belongs Gelsted's *Sirius* as well as *Klingen* and *Kritisk Revy*. For Harsløf, importantly, *Clarté* served the crucial role as bridge between the idealist cultural radicals and the materialist socialists. Bredsdorff's 1982 study of journal output in the 1930s is less concerned with this distinction than with what united both cliques, namely their commitment to anti-fascist agitation; indeed there is so much overlap during this period that it is difficult to untangle the two movements. But Bredsdorff does distinguish between those that lean radical and those that lean communist or socialist; in the former he

As has been indicated, Bredsdorff in the 1955 essay characterizes cultural radicalism as above all a manner of relating to the existing social world, and yet it is also just as much a particular *attitude*, a manner of expression which Rifbjerg has aptly characterized as "youthful" and "honest" as well as "hungry" and "eager" but also "unimpressed" and "coquettish" (10). By 1925 the *livsanskuelsesdebat* had broken out of the "serious" and "respectable" organs of cultural debate and into the tabloids, *Ekstrabladet* in fact conducting a public opinion poll on the question of "My Religion" (Møller Kristensen 29). The "old man's debate" had thus become an irresistible target for parody, and Gelsted would promptly oblige with his satirical poem "Prayer to the Modern Mentality," an early example of the cultural radical attitude at work:

> Holy mysticism, the mechanical world's finest flower, draws a veil over Isis, in whom the wisdom of the East and the West is united, I pray to you. I believe in Darwin and Madame Blavatsky, in atomic theory and in metempsychosis, critique and ecstasy. I believe in every miracle in both the literal and the figurative sense. I believe that I can mediate any superstition that has ever arisen.[31]

A little bit of sorely needed humor, then, in which *both* sides of the debate, importantly, come under the knife. Gelsted's poem is evidence of what Sven Møller Kristensen, in an important early study of the interwar period, has referred to as an emerging "lighter tone in Danish intellectual life," in which a "radical-social direction acquires the time and the place for a positive offensive" (77). In Denmark, the Social Democrats, who had permanently eclipsed the Radikal Venstre as the leading party of the Left, had in 1924

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category he includes as prominent examples *Aandehullet* (1933-34), *Kulturkampen* (1935-39), in which he himself had played an important role, as well as *Sex og Samfund* (1937-40).

[31] "Bøn til den moderne Mentalitet" appeared in the Feb/Mar issue of *Sirius*, and in book form for the first time in Gelsted's 1927 collection, *Rejsen til Astrid*. All translations from the Danish are, once again, by the author unless otherwise noted.

finally put an end to the deeply reactionary Venstre government of the early 1920s, although their first foray into power was tentative and uncertain and would not last long. More significant were matters abroad, where the Locarno Treaty of 1925 had effectively normalized relations between the former belligerents, an event that Møller Kristensen asserts marks the beginning of "the real *inter*war period or peacetime" (77). Cultural radicalism, as has been indicated, is possessed of no single inaugural event, as the earlier radicalism of Brandes had been; as such it remains difficult to pinpoint its precise moment of origin, and yet there is much to argue for Møller Kristensen's fixation on the year 1926.[32] It is in this year that Hartvig Frisch, the "official" intellectual of the Social Democratic party and sometime ally of the cultural radicals, together with Gelsted and Kirk, begin to publish the Danish edition of *Clarté*, the journal of the internationalist socialist and anti-war movement inaugurated by the French author Henri Barbusse. *Clarté* would serve as an essential bridge between the cultural radicals and the more materialist-oriented socialists and communists in the early years of the movement (Harsløf 72). And it is also in 1926, once again, that Henningsen begins to issue the seminal architecture and design journal *Kritisk Revy*, which has come to be seen in retrospect as the very most culturally radical of all the cultural radical publications. Møller Kristensen designates the period from 1926 to 1932 as the interwar period's "Intermezzo," a brief moment "of relative light between the fading shadow of the First World War and the menacing shadow of the Second" (77). Later historians of cultural radicalism have generally followed suit, designating the initial phase

[32] It should be noted here that Møller Kristensen does not employ the term cultural radicalism, as his study was authored in 1950, five years before Bredsdorff's coinage.

of the mid-1920s up to 1932 as the period in which the movement was on the offensive, after which, due to the rise of fascism abroad as well as, in an admittedly less menacing form, at home, the cultural radicals largely go over to the defensive (Bay "Kulturradikalismen" 18; Pjetursson 34).

While the war had forever shattered the inherited authority of the *enhedskultur*, the spirit of reaction could hardly be said to have vanished from the Denmark of the 1920s; indeed, the decade would be politically dominated by the Venstre, and in the domain of culture, the rather sorry spectacle of the *dysmorfismedebat* had provided an early indication that that the traditional ruling class could still draw blood when it felt its façade morality to be threatened.[33] The cultural radicals thus appropriately resume, as has been indicated, many of the earlier radical struggles for *individual* emancipation; Fjord Jensen has characterized this element of the cultural radical project as a broad effort to carve out a space for the "unfolding of the individual in defiance of institutions and conventions" (12). And as has been indicated, these efforts of the cultural radicals were considerably more sophisticated than those of the rather proudly amateurish literary radicals, for this time the radical movement had hard science on its side. As examples of success in these areas Fjord

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[33] The *dysmorfismedebat* was inaugurated in 1919 by the physician and former Copenhagen University rector Carl Julius Salmonsen. As Lasse Horne Kjælgaard recounts, the professor claimed that "Expressionism in modern art was related to epedemic psychic suffering among the artists," and that their work was evidence of a condition he termed "*dysmorphism*, from the Greek *dysmorphos*, which means deformed and ugly" (Mortensen and Schack 4 56-7). Another indication that the remnants of the *enhedskultur* were hardly out of the game was the 1923 obscenity trial of Rud. Broby-Johansen's Expressionist collection *Blood*; the poet himself, who had been involved in *Klingen* and who would long remain a fixture in cultural radical circles, gave in his defense a rousing speech attacking that old bogeyman of the literary radicals, namely the bourgeois sexual double morality. For more on the trial, see Kjælgaard in Mortensen and Schack 4; 106-7.

Jensen lists the final takedown of that old bogeyman of the Brandesians, namely that of the bourgeois sexual double morality, in favor of a "more honest and freer understanding of sexuality" (22), the right of woman "to realize herself as a human being without regard to responsibilities as a mother and wife" (24), and the gradual supplanting of the old authoritarian model of pedagogy by, once again, "a freer vision of childrearing" (23). By the 1960s the cultural radical program for individual emancipation had largely, as Peter Madsen has noted, been entirely absorbed into the official policy of the Danish welfare society; thus the movement ultimately ceased to be "an opposition movement outside the institutions" (325).

Thus the cultural radicals could be said to have brought to completion the Brandesian radical struggle for individual emancipation begun a half century before—*and yet they had wanted to do so much more*. In his seminal 1960 essay on the movement, the first to examine in it detail and which would set the terms of much future scholarship, Fjord Jensen thus describes the "social" aspect of the cultural radical project:

> On the other side it involved a demand for solidarity, for a brotherly regard, for a struggle for improvement in social conditions, for a healthier, more harmonious and organic family life, for decent conditions for fellow human beings across faith, race and ideology. Cultural radicalism was in this a *social ideology*; as such it drew sustenance from the sciences of society, respectively sociology and social psychology, and from historical materialism, which from a scientific basis formulated the laws for the development of society. (12)

The critic here has indeed performed a service of immense value in identifying the inner tension in the cultural radical emancipatory project between its "individual" and "class" aspects. And yet it is argued here that his particular characterization of class emancipation does not go far enough, that while he does employ some of the key language, he makes no

mention of social class or of class struggle. The reference to historical materialism *is* there, but the critic seems to suggest that the cultural radicals only engaged with it in a manner similar to the way they employed Freud or Reich or any of the other experts of the age in their general effort to "vitalize" and "humanize" the institutions of bourgeois civilization (12). And there is good reason for this, for Fjord Jensen does not in fact take seriously the cultural radical commitment to the project of class emancipation, instead depicting it as a wholly "bourgeois reform movement" that really only flirted with an "inconsequential and rudimentary Marxism;" in effect, he asserts that the cultural radicals did not in fact succeed in "breaking out of the bourgeois parlor." In this view he is seconded by Carl Erik Bay, who argues that the movement should be properly understood as a kind of anti-bourgeois bourgeois movement; defined not but what it was for but by what it was against: "its foundational position should be said to be by definition first and foremost anti-" ("Kulturradikalismen" 19).

While there is indeed much of substance in these appraisals, it must be observed here that they are in some ways at odds with the *self-understanding* of the movement. As Morten Thing has observed the Brandesian radicals had largely viewed their late 19th century alliance with the smallholder base of the Venstre as a practical necessity, as a means of better furthering their real concerns (19). Under the changed conditions of the 1920s it was the Social Democrats who were similarly on the rise, and they would certainly recruit their own "official" intellectuals, foremost among them the previously mentioned Hartvig Frisch as well as Julius Bomholt. The cultural radicals could just as easily have fallen into line here, pursuing their agenda for individual emancipation in close alliance

with the political party on the verge of entering into a long period of dominance. But they specifically reject this option of expediency, largely on the grounds that the Social Democrats after capturing the government adopt an increasingly accomodationist stance toward the bourgeoisie. Instead the cultural radicals align themselves with the Far Left of the Danish labor movement, namely the tiny Danish Communist Party (DKP), which Gelsted and Kirk would in fact formally join in 1931, although each, importantly, had long before expressed his *intellectual* conversion to the cause

The relationship between cultural radicalism and the project of class emancipation, which may be alternatively phrased as the movement's relationship to Marxism, is in fact a question of immense complexity. On the one hand it must be observed that the two movements do in fact maintain separate identities during the interwar period, a distinction that has been upheld by later historians. With respect to personnel, there is no denying that it is drawn overwhelmingly from the bourgeois; of the two figures discussed in this study, Henningsen and Kirk, neither could be said to have approached Marxism in a manner even remotely approximating that of Nexø's Pelle, that is through the direct experience of brutally exploitative labor conditions; but then again this has historically been the case for more than a few Marxists themselves, including, of course, Marx himself, as well as, by all means, the author of the present study. Henningsen, fundamentally a man of praxis, would take many of his ideological and philosophical cues from Gelsted, although he would never formally declare himself a Marxist, instead rather proudly wearing as a badge of honor the pejorative regularly hurled at him and his movement: salon

communist.[34] And yet his curious 1932 volume *Hvad med Kulturen?* [*What About Culture?*] reads much like a kind of communist confessional document, a conditional bringing into the fold of the cultural radical figure who most upheld the Brandesian radical faith in the possibilities of a humanized bourgeois civilization; this text shall receive comprehensive treatment in a forthcoming chapter. In sharp contrast Hans Kirk is very much a figure committed to Marxism, and yet it is Kirk who protects Henningsen from his orthodox communist detractors (Thing *Hans Kirk* 108). He is also the most vehemently pro-Soviet of cultural radical luminaries, and yet it is the overwhelming presence of Kirk himself that would insulate the development of the collective novel in Norden from the narrow strictures of official Soviet literary policy (Thing "Kulturradikalismen" 121).

It may very well be the case that the cultural radicals never do manage to break out of the bourgeois parlor entirely, that they remain in the end mere "salon communists," typical over-educated and beret-topped bourgeois intellectuals only playing at Marxism. Carl Erik Bay, in his essay "Tibage til Kant," offers in fact an overwhelmingly persuasive case that, at least with respect to Henningsen (by way of his mentor Gelsted), it is the "ethical" or "idealist" socialism of the Marburg School, rather than the historical materialism of Marx, that animates the movement throughout. But the perceived insufficiency of the cultural radical commitment to Marxism does not suggest, by any means, that they are not in fact committed to the project of class emancipation. To

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[34] For a superb—and entertaining—summary of the insult festival that surrounded Poul Henningsen, see Thing "Poul Henningsen" 235-6. Thing ("Kulturradikalismen" 234) also recalls that Hartvig Frisch even once seemed to suggest that Henningsen was only in on the game of the *kulturkamp* in order to insure that every worker would come to occupy a functionalist row house of his own design, illuminated of course by one of his own lamps.

understand how this is so, it must be recalled here that for the early 20th century European Left, and most certainly among the cultural radicals, the struggle for class emancipation is conceived of as twofold, that it is to be conducted not only within the domain of the material and the political, but just as much in the sphere of *the ideal* and of *the cultural*. As the labor movement begins to acquire momentum—the overthrow of the czarism in Russia, the rapid growth of socialist parties across the continent—, it becomes increasingly preoccupied with this latter aspect of the emancipatory project. Of particular interest is the question of what the *culture* of the emerging worker's society might come to look like, and how much of the old bourgeois order may be carried over to the new. A rather lively debate over this issue comes to develop, first in Germany at the end of the 19th century and after the First World War in Scandinavia. On the more cautious side are the adherents of the *udjævningsteori* [theory of equalization], who assert that "working-class cultural values be brought up to (equalize) the existing standards of the middle class" (de Francesco 37). This is of course an understanding of class emancipation as emancipation by virtue of the absorption of the historically oppressed into the privileged class, a more nakedly honest expression of what we call the American Dream, which seemingly presupposes that there is something inherently wrong with being working class, and that the historical *lebenswelt* of the low born must be quickly discarded upon arrival in the middle class. On the other side of the divide are the more ambitious proponents of the *erstatningsteori* [theory of replacement], which advocated for "an invigoration of class consciousness, demanding that sociopolitical structure in society at large be substituted by ones in which class consciousness was primary" (de Francesco 38). The advocates of the replacement theory

are not satisfied with merely "bringing up" the working class to the level of material bounty enjoyed by the bourgeoisie, they seek in addition the overthrow of the *cultural* basis of bourgeois civilization, the bottom-up reshaping of the existing social world after the image of an arisen working class, Franz Mehring's lovely old dream of an *Arbeiterkultur*, built up upon the fragments of an historically displaced bourgeoisie.[35]

As Harsløf has noted, the Social Democrats of the Stauning era were rather woefully underprepared for the *kulturkamp* that begins to unfold during the interwar period and thus largely ignore the issue altogether, instead maintaining a strict separation between "culture" and "work," thereby inscribing the bourgeois distinction between public and private spheres that Marx had so roundly condemned; when they do begin to involve themselves their participation is deeply constrained by the limits of practical politics, for Stauning and his intellectual allies seem to have determined that the introduction of an aggressive socialist cultural program would have been too divisive. The Social Democratic intellectual Julius Bomholt's *Arbejderkultur* of 1932 had, at least in theory, been an effort to outline such a program, but as de Francesco has aptly demonstrated, the roots of Bomholt's thinking are more properly to be located in the indigenous Danish "idea of a popular education in the Grundtvigian sense, rather than a socialist view of society" (41). And as the Social Democrats embarked upon their long period of rule in the 1930s, they would under the leadership of Stauning and Bomholt increasingly recast themselves less as a party of workers than as a more inclusive and less threatening *folkeparti*, as was made

[35] See de Francesco 7-19 for an excellent summary of the early German Marxist Mehring's thinking and its impact on prewar Germany, as well as its importance in postwar Scandinavia.

explicit in the 1934 initiative "Danmark for Folket."[36] Whatever cultural platform the Social Democrats did in fact put forth, then, comes down firmly on the side of the *udjævningsteori*.

For the cultural radicals, the Social Democrats' disengagement with culture amounts to an effective ceding of the cultural field to the bourgeoisie; on the ground this resulted in what Bay has called the *småborgerliggørelse* [petite-bourgeoisification] of the working class; by neglecting the cultural struggle, the Social Democrats were de facto permitting the very most undesirable aspects of the old society to define the new. It is precisely here that the cultural radicals demonstrate their commitment to the project of class emancipation, and likewise it is here that Bredsdorff's renaming of the freethinking movement to that of cultural radicalism proves to be eminently appropriate, for they conceive of themselves as contributing to the class struggle from the cultural side, an effort that is here termed the

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[36] The Danish adjective *folkelig*, from which the compound *folkeparti* is formed, is possessed of a number of senses, but is here used in its specifically political sense, loosely corresponding English "people's," as in the recent rallying cry of Wisconsin's protestors: "The state house is the people's house." This sense of the term remains highly contested and is claimed by parties from all over the political spectrum. The Konservative Folkeparti [Conservative People's Party] employs it in the old-fashioned sense of Denmark as represented by the Queen and the Dannebrog, while the anti-immigrant Danske Folkeparti [Danish People's Party] uses the term in a rather more menacing sense, positioning itself as the defender of the "real" Danes against more recent arrivals. Only the Socialistiske Folkeparti [Socialist People's Party], which formed in 1959 and is considered to be the political successor to the cultural radical movement of the interwar period, uses the designation in much the same manner as English, indicating an alignment with the historically oppressed and excluded. The rebranding of Socialdemokratiet from an *arbejderparti* to a *folkeparti* in 1934, in contrast, signifies the decision of the party leaders to leave the politics of class struggle and class conflict behind in a broader effort to increase its base. It should also be observed here that the Brandesian radicals specifically did not claim the term, instead initially situating themselves in sharp contrast, as the "European" wing of the Venstre. Another manner of distinguishing cultural radicalism from its precursor is thus that the cultural radicals sought to make the radical movement more *folkelig*, to close the gap between intellectual and "the people."

struggle for the *cultural* emancipation of the working class. As Morten Thing has aptly observed, from the cultural radical perspective what "communism was in politics, they themselves were in culture" ("Kulturradikalismen" 117). Into the yawing void opened up by the Social Democrats they therefore launch a flurry of cultural production, Henningsen in architecture and design and urban planning and song and revue, Kirk in the collective novel, each in *kulturkritik*. In the heady and hopeful early years of the movement, once again, this amounts to a positive offensive, perhaps most prominently in Henningsen's *Kritisk Revy*, which claims as its purpose the beating back of the bourgeois neoclassicism that was still then dominate in favor of a functionalist aesthetic more attuned to the changed social conditions of the age. After the movement goes over to the defensive upon Hitler's rise to power in 1932, the cultural agitation of the movement begins to acquire increasingly the nature of a mortal struggle, for as is well known, the base of National Socialism was located less in the working class or the bourgeoisie than in the *petite-bourgeois*. The Danish language is possessed of a particularly fitting word for this social group, namely that of the *flipproletar*, which designates a lower-level functionary defined neither by the blue collar of the laborer or the white of the bourgeois; the *flipproletar* was particularly hard hit by the crisis of 1929, and was moreover bereft of any "effective organization behind him and without the courage and the will to build up one" (Fjord Jensen 32). Henningsen would go so far as to suggest that the rise of Hitler was in fact only made possible by the fact the Nazi's were possessed of a particularly sophisticated cultural platform, while the German Social Democrats had, like their counterparts in Denmark, largely ignored the issue (*Kulturkritik* II; 6). This was an eventuality that that the cultural

radicals are determined to prevent in Denmark, and their activities after 1932 increasingly come to resemble those of a kind of cultural battle for hearts and minds.

In summary, then, cultural radicalism should be understood to be an emancipatory movement that attempts to trod the rather precarious pathway at the very juncture of the project's twin aspects, those of the individual and of social class, and further that the cultural radicals occupy themselves predominately with the cultural side of the latter, rather than the material and the political. While historically there has indeed been much overlap between these struggles—Martin Luther King's famous speech about the sanitation workers of Memphis immediately comes to mind—it must be observed here that the walking of such an ideological tightrope has proven extremely difficult to sustain. The reason for this is fairly simple: between the projects of individual and class emancipation *there exists no intrinsic connection*; Berlin's famous essay is best understood as a broad effort to demonstrate this single essential truth, that the two struggles have more often than not been historically at odds with one another. The former does not, in its essence, question the economic bulwark of bourgeois civilization, namely the exploitative relation between capital and labor, while the latter very much does so. It must also be noted here that between these two separate but often overlapping projects there remains an immense gulf with respect to their inherent *difficulty*; historically the various movements for individual emancipation across the globe have scored a rather staggering array of victories since the age of Rousseau and Mill and Brandes; certainly there has been considerable progress in the domain of social class as well, but it cannot be denied that since the fizzling out of the Long Boom in the 1970s and the Neoliberal ascendancy that followed in its wake

the social and economic conditions of the working class of the Global North have suffered serious *retraction*; this is to say nothing of the vast new industrial proletariat taking form across the South.[37] We have already seen, in the case of Brandes, how the relatively greater difficulty of the project of class emancipation can result in ultimate disillusion and consequent flight into evermore-antagonistic iterations of individualism; recall here Bredsdorff's observation of England in the mid 1950s: "The individual has more than enough to handle with his own problems; thus the world around him must take care of itself as best it can" (58).

Fjord Jensen's analysis of cultural radicalism is at its best when he asserts that the movement is determined by the inherent tension between the individual and the collectivity, that when it leans too far in the one direction or the other it surrenders all of its potency (26). With regard to results, it cannot be denied, once again, that with respect to the emancipation of the individual they were successful on virtually all accounts; by the 1960s they had changed Danish culture decisively, their program in this sphere comfortably incorporated into the official ideology of the welfare society, the movement in its individualist aspect effectively *aufgehoben*. With respect to the other side of the

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[37] As an example of the "difficulty gap" between the twin aspects of the emancipatory project, Michael Kazin in his recent history of the radical movement in the United States has noted that the American Left may claim as victories "equal opportunity and equal treatment for women, ethnic and racial minorities, and homosexuals; the celebration of sexual pleasure unconnected to reproduction; a media and education system sensitive to racial and gender oppression and which celebrates what we now call multiculturalism; and the popularity of novels and films with a strongly altruistic and anti-authoritarian point of view (xiii). And yet in its struggle for class emancipation, the Left has always "confronted a yawning contradiction: in life as opposed to rhetoric, the desire for individual liberty routinely conflicts with yearning for social equality and altruistic justice" (xviii).

emancipatory project results were as to be suspected rather less than satisfying. While it cannot be denied that Denmark and indeed all of Norden have made immense strides toward closing the equity gap between capital and labor—the Nordic social democracies after all remain to this day the very aspirational ideal for much of the Global Left—, it must also be admitted that the cultural radical struggle for the *cultural* emancipation of the working class has never really materialized. Henningsen himself would concede as much in an essay of 1963, mournfully observing that "the working class has been pulled up into the petite-bourgeoisie" and that "the dream of an *Arbeiterkultur* . . . can be written off" (*Kulturkritik IV* 113). The cultural radicals had achieved so much, they may even, if Bredsdorff's account is to be taken seriously, have beaten back National Socialism in Denmark; but they had wanted so much more.

Chapter Two: Poul Henningsen

I have understanding as well as you.

-Job 12:3

The name of Poul Henningsen, or PH, as he is universally known by his many admirers as well as his no less numerous detractors, is in contemporary Denmark virtually synonymous with the idea of cultural radicalism. And this is true no less in a literal sense than in the figurative. As has been indicated, the movement known in the interwar period as *frisindet* would only acquire in Denmark the name of *kulturradikalismen* in the years after the Second World War, specifically in the aforementioned 1955 essay by Elias Bredsdorff and the considerable debate in its wake, followed by the "New Radical" revival in the 1960s sparked by a 1960 special issue of the left wing journal *Dialog*, and then reappearing again after the capture of the government by the Venstre in 2001, albeit in this latter day moment in an almost exclusively defensive iteration. As Niels Peter Skou has correctly observed, the history of the term since 1955 has thus been a history of *contestation*:

> The debate about cultural radicalism . . . has had the character of a *definitionskamp*, in which politics, memory and the writing of history have been closely connected . . . It is in this way characteristic that in Denmark the concept historiographically is related to the *kulturkamp* of the interwar period, but at the same time as a stance in the cultural debate is a distinctly postwar phenomenon." (306)

Henningsen occupies a position within this conflict of unique centrality, for he is at once the *object* of backward looking historical analysis and at the same time an active *subject* in the

ongoing cultural debate, at least in its initial and subsequent phases, up until his death in 1967. Because Henningsen is the first to claim proudly the mantle of *kulturradikaler*, the struggle over defining him and his legacy is in many ways identical to the struggle of defining cultural radicalism itself.

His credentials in the earlier, Brandesian radical movement could not be more impeccable; indeed in many ways the figure of Poul Henningsen constitutes the closest approximation of the "direct line" between the two phases of radicalism sought after by Bredsdorff. His mother Agnes was an accomplished novelist, a prominent member of the turn of the century bohemian circle known as the Copenhagen Realists, a group which, as Fjord Jensen has observed, brought Ibsen's relatively restrained conception of sexual liberty to its logical extreme, advocating as well as practicing "a flimsy and a little decadent libertinism, at the worst . . . a limp flaneur eroticism" (16). It is likely at Copenhagen's Café Bernina, the unofficial hub of the circle frequented by, among other fin de siècle luminaries, Georg Brandes, as well as, just as importantly for present purposes, the official meeting place of the radical *Studentersamfund*, that Agnes would meet the author and editor Carl Ewald, the man who would become the father of Poul. The conception and subsequent rearing of Poul represents an instance of the principle of free love made manifest that may seem rather mind-boggling to our contemporary sensibilities. In 1894 Agnes was already the mother of three children by her husband Mads Henningsen, while Carl Ewald, for his part, had by then sired several children by his own wife, the rather remarkably understanding Betty, who seems to have had no issue with the fact that her home was

widely known as "Carl Ewald's harem." Of Carl Ewald biographer Paul Hammerich has this to say:

> When he received notice of the results of his erotic arts, he would suddenly become busy and must leave on a long journey. He was a master at arranging things to his own benefit. Every time his wife Betty should give birth, she was sent down to his sister, the wife of a carpenter in Vordingborg. If he had made a girl fat, then he soon got his eye on a thin one. (39)

That Betty is a forgiving wife is rather an understatement, for not only would the birth of the love child take place within the "harem" itself, but young Poul would shortly after entering the world be spirited off to said relatives in Vordingborg, where he would be raised in foster care until returning to his mother in 1899; young Poul's early sojourn in a carpenter's home would indeed come to have significant consequences for his later activity as architect, for as his recent biographer Hans Hertel has noted, PH throughout his life conceived of himself as just as much a "carpenter, bricklayer and mechanic" as an elevated practitioner and theorist of the building arts (*PH* 55). Back in the capital, Agnes' husband Mads, apparently no less an adherent of the free love principle, would a year after the birth of Poul be forced to flee to the United States, thanks to a moment of indiscretion with a female student at the Latin School at which he was instructor; Agnes herself, with her four children in fosterage, would support herself as a beautician until 1899 when she began to earn enough from publishing royalties to reunite with her children in Roskilde.

In spite of the rather remarkable circumstances of his birth, Poul would turn out to be not only a love child, but a deeply loved child as well. Indeed his early years would come to resemble a kind of radical/freethinking fairy tale; Henningsen would later recall, in a 1964 interview marking the occasion of his 70th birthday, that his mother imposed only a

single rule on his upbringing, that he not come to resemble his (rather financially challenged) father (*Eventyr* 27). Young Poul was encouraged to experiment in all manner of creative activities, a blessing he would gratefully acknowledge in the aforementioned interview: "I think that my life has been a series of adventures . . . I have been quite privileged . . . for the great majority of people risk missing out on their vocation, and I have been permitted to try out every vocation I have desired" (*Eventyr* 25). In the same interview Henningsen recalls the long list of literary lights who were regular guests in the home of his emancipated mother; not only, of course, the Brandes brothers themselves, who were guests of honor at his eighteenth birthday, but the novelists Jeppe Aakjær and Gustav Wied as well as the poet Louis Levy and the Norwegian illustrator Ragnvald Brix; this is not to mention the fact that it was no less a literary dignitary than Herman Bang who helped to launch the career of Agnes (*Eventyr* 28). Despite such formidable literary surroundings, young Poul would first be drawn to activities more technical and more artistic in nature; he would immediately begin to make good use of the workbench that had been presented to him by his foster parents at the tender age of three, first as an enthusiastic designer of kites, a youthful passion which would remain with him throughout his long life. Upon completing his gymnasium studies in 1911, Henningsen would in fact initially enroll in technical school, where he would encounter one of the first and most influential of his mentors, the designer Svend Johansen; Hammerich recalls that the first four subjects they studied together included "women, absinthe, Cubism and humor" (110). For his early efforts at the Tekniske Skole in Nørrebro, Henningsen would be awarded the

first of the many prizes and decorations he would acquire over a lifetime of creative activity, this time for a bicycle with a self-inflating pump, operated by peddling.

But his first love was in fact painting, specifically in the mode of the post-impressionist landscape "bordering on expressionism," which he would pursue enthusiastically until largely abandoning it around 1914 (Hertel *PH* 55). That Henningsen's first serious passion was for painting would prove enormously consequential both for his future vocation as architect as well as, more generally, the unfolding of the cultural radical movement itself. Of this Henningsen would later reflect in his seminal *kampskrift* of 1933, *Hvad med Kulturen?*, to which we shall shortly turn at length:

> It has been of great importance for my development that I began as a painter. It was so striking, when one came from that side into architecture, that architecture was subsisting on a dying aesthetic, that it was quite un-painterly in the modern sense. In a cultural period of value one must describe contemporary architecture painterly, but that was unthinkable at the time. The period [1900-1920] is also interesting as proof that a talented artist can well serve the cause of conservatism. Even the best people within architecture at that time did not sense the existence of the working class. It was a purely upper class art—and completely without value. (*Kulturkritik II* 22).

It was painting, and specifically the Cubist revolution that arose around the time of the outbreak of the First World War, then, that effectively saved Henningsen from an ordinary career as bourgeois architect, designer of the villas and the monumental "monstrosities" in what he contemptuously refers to as the *plyssesstil* [plush style]. In his superb 2001 essay on the origins of cultural radicalism, Klaus Rifbjerg seconds this notion:

> It was—as always—first and foremost in architecture and pictorial art that the new thinking came forward . . . With Cubsim and Functionalism something happened.

> Suddenly a *sammenhæng*[38] became visible: if one wanted democracy, one must also have *a democratic art* . . . One knew that in the least all of the piled up, the elaborate, the tasseled—the whole inheritance from Victorianism must be scrubbed away, so that one could get into the essential, the singular lines, the functional, the unaffected. (18-19)

Much of the early constellation of the movement would unfold within the pages of the aforementioned "proto" cultural radical journal *Klingen*, which "began as a purely art journal in 1917," but through the encounter with Cubism would gradually develop outward in a more social direction (Andersen et al 15). Already in the years immediately following the First World War, then, we can begin to glimpse the general trend in Scandinavia away from the inherently socially hostile tendencies of European High Modernism, defined as that more celebrated movement was by its potent dose of *kulturpessimismus*; Henningsen's role in fostering this cultural development, as we shall see, would prove to be decisive in the coming years.

With respect to his creative activities over the decades, Henningsen recognized few boundaries. The inventory of the media in which he made significant contributions is indeed rather staggering: painter, architect and urban planner, lamp and furniture

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[38] The Danish term *sammenhæng*, or, alternatively, *kultursammenhæng*, is perhaps the most central of Henningsen's categories. Literally transcribed the word means "hanging together," and it is commonly translated as "connection," as "coherence," or, somewhat misleadingly for present purposes, "context." Rifbjerg here employs it in a sense most closely approximating the former definition, e.g. Cubism served to reveal the profound connection between previously believed to be isolated and autonomous concerns of the aesthetic and that of the social/political. In Hennginsen's oeuvre the concept of (*kultur*) *sammenhæng* appears in numerous guises, many of which will be investigated in the present study. Because of the multiple meanings of this term in Henningsen's work, the author has chosen to forego translating it into English in favor of the original Danish.

designer, poet, composer of popular songs and revues, aphorist, filmmaker. And yet in spite of this manifold of activity, Henningsen conceived of himself just as much as *kulturkritiker* as well as *pædagog*, as a tireless and unrelenting polemicist in the ongoing *kulturkamp* of the interwar period, first in the 1920s against the remnants of the old and decaying *enhedskultur*, later, more defensively, against the rising tide of fascism both abroad as well as, more importantly, at home. In hundreds of journal articles, newspaper editorials and reviews as well as regular speaking engagements, he would become the very public face of the cultural radical movement, and indeed it is largely this aspect of his work, PH as cultural critic and activist (with the possible exception of his 1935 *Danmarksfilm*, his sole venture into filmmaking) that has secured his reputation as the irrepressible figure of controversy, the most provocative figure in a movement rather enthralled with the idea of provocation. And by no means should the long list of those he provoked be limited to figures of the political Right. Already in the previous chapter mention has been made of the "salon communist" feud between Henningsen and Hartvig Frisch. The longtime Social Democratic activist Henning Tjørnehøj, moreover, has in fact recently demonstrated that the bad feelings of the past are hardly past:

> But when contemporary cultural radicals nearly make him into the successor of Georg Brandes I have difficulty going along. PH was good at verse. Out of that came some acceptable revue songs. But both as political artist and as social critic he was in my opinion a very small spirit. (251)

Tjørnehøj's specific complaint, that Henningsen harbored an irrational hatred of the Social Democrats, goes straight to the heart of the critic's lifelong effort to urge the party to pursue an assertive and forward looking cultural platform:

> PH maintained an implicit faith in what art—painting no less—and architecture could achieve politically and socially. He nourished from the same ground a frenetic hatred of the Social Democrats, because they did not share his faith in art. PH had besides this great difficulty in feeling any gratitude that it was that party which insured . . . that Denmark by and large in the course of the 20th century became such a good country to live in for so many, a welfare state. (251)

Ingratitude, this was the charge regularly leveled at not only at Henningsen himself, but at the cultural radicals in general, for they had, once again, desired so much more than mere material prosperity for Denmark.

The present study selects as its focus this most controversial of Poul Henningsen's many vocations, namely that of cultural critic and social activist/ pedagogue, for it is this aspect of his life's work in which he consistently engaged throughout, and, moreover, it is likely here that he has most to teach us. And yet it must be immediately conceded that Henningsen as cultural critic is hardly a consistent and even-handed figure, especially in comparison to Hans Kirk, to whom we shall turn in the following chapter. For all of the lifelong brotherly warmth between Henningsen and Otto Gelsted, it must be recalled here that the latter once referred to the former, in all good humor of course, as no less than an *analfabet*[39]. Poul Hammerich's 1986 biography of the critic has indeed been roundly criticized for brushing over the manifold of self-contradictions within Henningsen's life and thought, most recently by his latest, and much more critical biographer Han Hertel, who sees in the earlier work "a cheerfully idealized PH, a little of a figure of legend, purged of the seamy sides and the hitches" (*PH* 12). Jørn Guldberg, a participant in the recently concluded multi-year Henningsen research project at the University of Southern Denmark,

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[39] See Henningsen's poem in honor of Gelsted's seventieth birthday in Houmann *Hilsen* 17.

has perhaps identified a manner of approaching the critic that accounts for the multitude of inner paradoxes, by eschewing any notion of "a kind of PH grand theory" in favor of select "figures of thought" that serve to bind the various aspects of the authorship together into something resembling coherence (20). Yet in the analysis to come we shall see that there is indeed some measure of an irreducible core to Henningsen as thinker, although we must constantly recall that he is, as Hertel has aptly described him, profoundly "winding and tangled" (*PH* 12).

As widely spread across different media as Henningsen's creative activities are, his critical corpus should be understood to be just as equally diffuse. Carl Erik Bay and Olav Harsløf have correctly noted that the critic himself, importantly, was indeed conscious of this fact, identifying the reason for this thematic *complexity* (or alternatively, as Tjørnehøj as well as numerous others would charge, *confusion*) in the all important aforementioned category of *kultursammenhæng*, which they aptly define as "the demonstration of the parallel tendencies within the different fields and areas" of cultural production and social phenomena (8). No medium of artistic production, be it the "pure" arts of painting or music or the "applied" arts of architecture or design may be viewed in isolation from one another; even less should cultural production be construed as independent of the social sphere. Henningsen should thus be understood as a cultural critic with a profound tendency towards "muddling," yet as Bay and Harsløf rightly note, his propensity to "treat numerous themes at the same time" should be viewed as a *conscious* act. Henningsen himself would reflect on this tendency in his thinking in *Hvad med Kulturen*?, asserting rather paradoxically, and in sharp contrast to Habermas' reflections on the unfolding of cultural

modernity, to which we shall shortly turn, that such critical diffusion is a natural outcome of specialization:

> I am familiar with those who are according to their abilities compelled to participate in cultural work, and it is precisely along that way that I have come into the worker's movement . . . It is in no way however a regrettable method of reaching one's political commitment, in that one searches deeper and deeper into the preconditions of one's field. In such an investigation it becomes striking how *sammenhængende* culture is in all its forms, and that is why from my original field I have branched both the critical and productive work out into other cultural spheres. The work under no circumstances thereby becomes more superficial or scattered. While the specialist in building arts, the architect, can spread himself over a thousand widely divergent projects with different preconditions, he who has as his specialty the search for *sammenhæng* in the culture must have his task tightly woven together by critical method and clear fundamental view. Therefore it occurs to me—quite in contrast to the conventional meaning—that I have over the years acquired more and more coherence in my work. (*Kulturkritk II* 45-6)

Hence the more the specialist dives into the special nature of her field, the more she becomes aware of the inbuilt connections between her field and others as well as, moreover, the more profound connections between cultural production in general and the social factors which, at least in the thinking of Henningsen, determine so much of both its form and content. That Henningsen's many commentators, those who favorably hold him up as cultural radical icon as well as his no less numerous detractors, would hardly agree with him on the latter point, that his work becomes more focused over time, is largely beside the point here, for at this point in the analysis we remain largely concerned with the self-conception of the critic and productive artist.

In spite of the rather foxy nature of Henningsen as thinker, in spite of the "self-conscious muddling," it is perhaps permissible to attempt to identify an absolute ground to his thinking, a central orientation from which the critic never departs throughout his long

life. Fjord Jensen, once again the first commentator to investigate in detail the interwar movement of cultural radicalism, would likely define this central core as the essentially bourgeois struggle for the emancipation of the individual, with particular emphasis on sexual and women's emancipation as well as pedagogical reform. And yet, as has been argued previously, Fjord Jensen is likely too narrow in his construal of the movement and its self-appointed leader, for he consciously downplays the admittedly less forthright and yet nonetheless still substantial element of class emancipation in Henningsen and in cultural radicalism at large; recall here Henningsen's previously cited recollection that it was his "discovery" of the working class that proved decisive in the development of his architecture and his thinking. Bay and Harsløf, alternatively and in a slightly different register, identify Henningsen's critical starting part as the *kunstneriske*, albeit in which the artist, or more specifically the architect, must first and foremost occupy himself with "the social questions" and with the effort toward fostering "a new and democratic culture" (10). This is in many ways the conventional view of Henningsen today, a conception of the architect and critic as, paradoxically enough, a kind of "social aesthete" (or, depending on which way one leans, "aesthetic social thinker"), that is to say a figure according to whom social and aesthetic concerns not only can but *should* exist in a comfortable harmony with one another. It must be noted here, however, that Henningsen's commitment to the social over against the purely aesthetic did in fact weaken over the years, particularly late in his life, as he become increasingly aware that the gulf between the expert cultures of the art world and the public was not, as he had boldly dreamed, working towards its closure, but

in fact widening.[40] A further view, building off that of Bay and Harsløf, asserts that it is the concept of democracy itself that most animates Henningsen's thinking; Morten Thing, focusing his analysis on Henningsen's break with Danish pro-Soviet communists in the immediate postwar era, recalls how his conception of democracy "moves toward an evermore central position" in his thinking after the war (*PH* 250). Marianne Stidsen, finally, returns to Fjord Jensen, arguing that Henningsen's oeuvre is defined by a kind of "social humanism" in which "the freest and richest possible unfolding of individuality, difference and personality . . . is seen all the way through as a social matter that is closely tied to what is best for the collectivity" (59).

A multitude of perspectives here, from individual emancipation to the artistic to democracy to social humanism, yet each of these categories may in fact be comfortably fitted under that which Hans Hertel has defined as arguably Henningsen's actual overriding perspective, that of "The Struggle for the Modern, that is to say the social and mental modernization of the industrial society" (*PH* 27). As Harsløf has aptly observed, the cultural radical movement is distinguished from Brandesian radicalism in that the former tends to relate itself consciously and directly to *the particular demands of the age*, whereas

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[40] It is fairly commonplace to assert that Henningsen as *folkelig* intellectual never attacks the public for its ignorance of the arts, but only those responsible for insuring such ignorance, e.g the culture industry; c.f. Guldberg: "In the first place he rarely directs his critique toward so called ordinary people . . . The object of his critique was on the other hand people with responsibility and entrusted positions whose decisions had consequences for many people" (24-5). Hans Hertel's recent biography, in fact, maintains as one of its central goals the redressing of this view, providing a convincing overview of the critic's gradual drift away from this form of "aesthetic populism" toward a more conventional High Modernist elitism, especially in the last decade of his life. See in particular section A, "Avantgarden og hæren. Kunsten, smagen, fremskridtet og 'Folket,'" in his *PH: en biografi*.

the latter, for all of its belligerent advocacy of the modern, really occupied itself with the relatively "timeless" ideologies of post-French Revolution Europe (13). Along with his colleagues at *Klingen*, Henningsen was among the first in Denmark to recognize what Leif Pjetursson has called *den nye livsfølelse* [the new life-feeling] that began to emerge during the First World War and would ultimately consolidate itself, helped along by the activity of the cultural radicals, in the 1920s and 30s (26). This "new life-feeling" which Henningsen refers to as "the modern" is expansive enough to encompass each of the aforementioned areas of interest. In the first place the bold efforts of the earlier Radical movement, together with the impact of the war on the old *enhedskultur*, had insured that the new social world must make place for a dramatically expanded conception of the free individual, and in the next it must be recalled again here that it was in the pictorial arts that the new sensibility first made itself manifest; hence Henningsen's insistence that the new urbanism of the postwar era must seek to make of the city no less than a work of art. The transition in Denmark from limited to full parliamentary democracy in 1904, as well as, moreover, the emergence of the industrial proletariat over against the decaying bourgeoisie in the years following, further insures that the new age ought to be governed by the principles of democracy, in the arts no less than in politics. Stidsen's conception of a "social" humanism, Gelsted preferred the term "revolutionary," finally, demonstrates that for the cultural radicals the appropriate form of social relations for the modern era would in fact be a kind of radical socialism, albeit in Henningsen's case a socialism very different from that emerging in the Soviet Union.

That it is ultimately the struggle for the modern that is at the heart of all of Henningsen's thought is evident from the fact that his very first foray into the *kulturkamp* was indeed the effort to modernize the teaching of architecture in Denmark, the so-called Academy Affair of the late 1910s. In the pages of *Klingen* Henningsen would lead the charge against the perceived neoclassical traditionalism of the Academy's docent, Vilhelm Wanscher. In a 1919 *Klingen* essay entitled "Om Studieplanen for den moderne Kunstner," Henningsen offers up his first concrete formulation of his conception of the modern artist as fundamentally a "social" artist, by laying out a comprehensive reform program for the pedagogy of the arts:

> The docenture in Italian art must be replaced with a docenture in ordinary knowledge. The professorships in temple architecture and Danish with professorships in economics, hygiene and social thought. The whole of technical instruction must be revised, so that it determines the boundaries and does not rest on dogmatic and obsolete building regulations. And the only artistic learning the students should receive is the initiation into historically prior architectural theory. ("Studieplanen" 426).

It is should be immediately apparent here that Henningsen's formulation of the modern departs rather significantly from the High Modernist tradition as inaugurated in France by Gauthier and Baudelaire. In one sense Henningsen does match the bullishness of French Modernism with respect to the elevation of the modern artist/ aesthetic modernity over and above that of the bourgeois conception of modernity, indeed in some ways in Henningsen art is possessed of a *greater* capacity to effect social change than in what we think of as conventional High Modernism which, as Calinescu has aptly charted, ultimately expends itself in frustration and the self-parody of kitsch (7). And no less does Henningsen reject the empty mimicry of traditional forms characteristic of academic art, for art in his

thinking is possessed of a similar imperative of the new as in Baudelaire. And yet it is equally clear that Henningsen's conception of the modern artist stands in stark contrast to Gauthier's demand for the absolute autonomy of the aesthetic, for PH seeks to replace the survey courses in the Italian Renaissance not with a conception of art for art's sake, but instead with "ordinary knowledge" as well as "economics, hygiene and social thought." As Carl Erik Bay has described, the impact of the 1919 "dysmorfismedebat" on the *Klingen* circle would trigger a considerable measure of self-critique, resulting in Henningsen (as well as Gelsted) becoming the representatives of a "moderating influence" with respect to the introduction of international Modernism into Denmark ("Kristiske metode" 125). In effect, the Scandinavians could be said, in large part due to the activities of Henningsen and his like-minded colleagues, to have come to steer a "middle path" not only in politics and social relations, but in aesthetics as well.

It is in his influential 1927 *Kritisk Revy* essay on "Tradition og modernisme," one of the few places in which Henningsen gathers his thinking into something resembling a comprehensive theoretical framework, that the critic most clearly charts this middle path of aesthetic Modernism. Here the critic reflects on the conflict between the Old and the New that had so perplexed Baudelaire, remarking famously that the movement over which he exerts so much influence essentially seeks to *circumnavigate* the twin poles of tradition and modernity: "We do not stand in the middle. We intend to stand above" (*Kulturkritik I* 65). Fjord Jensen has offered a superb summary of this two front struggle:

> First and most forcefully [it was conducted] against the pseudo-classicism of the 1920s, against traditionalism; in this a struggle against the many attempts to carry over the characteristics of the styles of earlier ages in contemporary building arts,

> characteristics that in their original context had been appropriate, but carried over into a new time became false romanticism. On the other side the struggle was directed at the misunderstood modernism, which in comical enthusiasm for the new technical possibilities of construction aimed for a new, artificial style. Against the aestheticism of traditionalism and modernism the group saw it as its task the struggle for a realistic, an honest and functional building arts. (19-20)

The efforts of the ruling bourgeoisie to carry over both the monumental styles of the Renaissance or the Baroque or the Empire periods into the new era are expressive of a facetious desire to deck itself out "with historical, completely disheveled feathers" and must be rejected with vehemence; Henningsen's preferred whipping boys here include the Copenhagen central police station as well as those ubiquitous gas stations adorned with Greek columns (*Kulturkritik* II 21). But the new architecture must just as well resist the temptation of what Henningsen refers to as the "false" Modernism of the emerging International Style, which has fetishized the new technical advances at the expense of function, which is or at least ought to be the governing principle. In the essay on "Tradition og modernisme" the critic offers up a kind of turbocharged iteration of the Bauhaus school of functionalist design, asserting axiomatically that "*we desire in no way any new form that is not dictated by the task*" (*Kulturkritik* I 65). The external conditions imposed by society upon the artist do not, as in the increasingly militant versions of the Modernist avant-gardes, amount to standards against which the artist must rebel, but instead constitute a *constituent element* of artistic production. Henningsen puts this succinctly in yet another of his axiomatic statements: "It is possible that the conditions from outside destroy the possibility of making art, but the artist cannot create without them" (*Kulturkritik* I 79). This is a conception of the modern artist that is, as Bay has observed, profoundly de-

romanticized, of the artist as no less than "society's workman" ("Kritiske metode" 134). Modern art is thus understood here, in sharp contrast to more militant iterations of artistic Modernism, to be fundamentally *narrower* than the art of the past, for as Henningsen rightly observes in the essay, the new boundaries placed by Cubism on art "where in fact much narrower than those known beforehand, and the area cultivated was quite small" (*Kulturkritik I* 76). Art becomes new, in Henningsen's thinking, not so much by opening new possibilities, but paradoxically by establishing new *strictures*.

Poul Henningsen's central animating spirit, that central core from which he never departs throughout his long career, must then be understood to be in the larger sense his broader conception of modernity and in the narrower his relatively circumscribed notion of a "moderate" aesthetic Modernism. While it is asserted here that there is much that is distinct in this from more celebrated continental variants of Modernism, it should be conceded here that the thinking of the critic by no means may be construed as wholly original, if indeed any thinking at this late stage in our history may in fact be said to be. Specifically, Henningsen's thinking on modernity and the modern belongs to the larger tradition of what Habermas has called the philosophical discourse of modernity, which begins of course with Baudelaire in the mid 19th century and arguably, depending on where one falls on the ideological spectrum, continues into the present age. There is perhaps a certain value in attempting to relate the critic to this tradition, which must first be spelled out in some detail in the following interlude.

As has been indicated, with near unanimity theorists of modernity credit Baudelaire, with his mid 19th century salon reviews, as giving birth to our present conceptions of modernity and the modern. Baudelaire's first major contribution is one of identification, namely that of the gradual disintegration of the previously relatively happy harmony between artist and society. Only a generation or two previously, no less a Romantic luminary than Novalis could still cling to this harmony, as is evidenced by the gentle and wholly edifying interplay between Heinrich von Ofterdingen and the itinerant merchants who accompany him along his journey. And yet by the 1840s Baudelaire has recognized that such an equilibrium had become a thing of the past, replaced by a climate of mutual hostility between artist and bourgeois: "I see in front of me the Soul of the Bourgeoisie; and believe me, if I were not afraid of indelibly staining the hangings of my cell, I would gladly fling my ink-stand in her face" (189). Modernity for Baudelaire is thus in its essence bifurcated, its two signal variants, the aesthetic and the bourgeois, locked into never ending conflict. It is however equally important to note that the poet's famous notion of the "Two Modernities" amounts to a selective rejection of modernity, specifically to the worst excesses of the bourgeois monarchy and to the "Hausmannization" of Paris which followed during the Second Empire. In Baudelaire's modernist aesthetics there can be no talk of a return to the discredited models of the past, for in accordance with the doctrine of *épater le bourgeois*, the modern artist must seek, in spite of considerable limitations, to "make us see and understand, with brush or with pencil, how great and poetic we are in our cravats and patent-leather boots" (32). Aesthetic modernity must not simply disengage with bourgeois modernity by fleeing to the past, it must on the contrary actively engage with it, attempting,

in Baudelaire's term, to *distil* the eternal beauty concealed within the cloak of presentness. In the essay on "Tradition og modernisme," Henningsen offers his own take on these concerns, modified, of course, by his own stress on the essentially social function of the artist. In those aesthetic eras he defines as harmonious, the demands of the social and those of the ruling (bourgeois) class are more or less equivalent; in such epochs it is the "free" rather than the "applied arts" which thrive. Such an era of harmony has, according to Henningsen, recently concluded, that being the 19th century in Denmark and more broadly in Norden, which was primarily the stage of the emergent bourgeoisie's struggle against the remnants of the earlier, feudal regime of the *enevælde* [absolute monarchy]. But in the 20th century we have entered into that which Henningsen terms an *omvæltningstid* [time of upheaval], in which the social demands and those of the ruling class are fundamentally out of whack; in such eras we must look to the applied arts for direction.

That single figure who has most occupied himself with Baudelairean modernity is most certainly Matei Calinescu, whose monumental study *Five Faces of Modernity* develops a theoretical framework for the concept which is possessed of immense explanatory power for all subsequent historical development. Baudelaire's central contribution to this discourse, according to Calinescu, is to be found in the fact that his novel definition of Romantic (or, interchangeably, modern) art results in the effective closure of the earlier *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*. In characterizing Romantic art as no more than "the latest expression of the beautiful," Baudelaire irrevocably undermines the ground beneath the *Querelle*, by effectively removing the *periodizing* function of the adjective modern (46). If, as Baudelaire asserts throughout the salons, eternal beauty may only reveal itself within

the guise of the fleeting present, then it is no longer possible to speak of ancient or modern art, for "what has survived (aesthetically) from the past is nothing but the expression of a variety of successive modernities" (49). Baudelaire's concept of Romantic/ modern art has as its most profound consequence the aforementioned imperative that the modern artist must submit to "a forgetful immersion in the 'now'" (Calinescu 49). Because the models of the past have been deprived of any normative dimension, the modern artist must necessarily, in accordance with the Baudelairean doctrine of the Heroism of Modern Life, continuously renew himself, must seek to push further and further out into the uncharted and perilous realms of the "not-yet." Baudelaire's radical imperative of the new discloses the essential *dynamism* of aesthetic modernity, a dynamism which crashes up against the demands of bourgeois modernity, with all of its emphasis on steady progress, on continuity, on sobriety. It is here that Henningsen's thinking is most clearly indebted to Baudelaire, as is evidenced by his commentary in the essay on "Tradition og modernisme" on those hated Greek columns:

> The column is, when we imagine the age in which it was created, naturally a work of art of high rank, but at the moment at which we use it and reproduce it, it is no longer a work of art but a fully recognized content, which once and for all is formed as perfectly as possible. (*Kulturkritik I* 68).

From this observation Henningsen formulates the most outright Baudelairean of the many axioms present in the text: "It follows from this that the art of the past is only art seen from the preconditions of the past" (*Kulturkritik I* 68). With respect to the imperative of the new, Henningsen again seems to offer up an essentially socialized iteration. For Henningsen, once again, we are living through a period of upheaval, in which new forms

are demanded in order to bring about a readjustment of the desires of the ruling class that they may be reunited with those of the social; this demand the critic construes as no less than a moral demand, which could in fact be termed a *social* imperative of the new.

For Calinescu, the essence of Baudelaire's foundational status as a theorist of modernity is to be located in his revolutionary notion of time. "Bourgeios" modernity in Baudelaire, says Calinecsu, is characterized by a view of time as "objectified" and socially measurable," a conception perhaps most memorably expressed in Benjamin Franklin's equation of time and money (5). Categorically opposed to the bourgeois notion of time is that of aesthetic modernity, which Calinescu qualifies as "personal," "subjective" and "private," the view of time which would reach its fullest rendering in Bergson's concept of *dureé*, in his insistence on the essentially qualitative and non-spatial nature of time (5). Calinescu asserts that the unfolding of historical modernity has largely been the story of the *progressive intensification* of the conflict between these widely divergent conceptions of time, the one insisting on the preservation of *historical continuity*, the other equally insistent on the *rupture*, on the increasingly vehement rejection of past and present in favor of the not-yet. The development of cultural modernity after Baudelaire is thus characterized by an ever-growing emphasis on the rupture, as Baudelaire's insistence on the continuing relevance of the eternal in beauty gradually gives way to the increasingly radical imperative of the new. This essential *instability* at the heart of aesthetic modernity, Calinescu proceeds, directly results in the ever-increasing *militancy* of the *avant-gardes*, each a more decisive break with its predecessors, and yet each resulting in an equal measure of failure and futility, as is evidenced in the end by the ultimate disintegration of

the Surrealist rebellion. The essential *futility* of resistance on the part of aesthetic modernity, furthermore, engenders the profound sense of crisis at the very heart of cultural modernity, resulting in that which Calinescu qualifies as a kind of mirror image of the *avant-gardes*, the emergence of *decadence*, which is here appropriately rendered at the moment at which "modernity turns against itself" (5).

The ultimate failure of cultural modernity to resist the relentless encroachments of bourgeois modernity into ever-increasing facets of modern human being has not only lead to the near exhaustion of the former, but also, in Calinescu's grand scheme of things, the latter. Echoing Daniel Bell, Calinescu argues that in the conflict between the Two Modernities the core values of each have so interpenetrated one another that they have effectively nullified themselves. If aesthetic modernity has been effectively disarmed through what has been called the "commodification of dissent,"[41] then a similar process can no less be located within the unfolding of bourgeois modernity as well, for as Calinescu observes, "the traditional ideal of bourgeois life, with its concerns for sobriety and rationality . . . has reached the point where it simply cannot be taken seriously" (6). This mutual nullification has, for Calinescu, naturally resulted in the final two "faces" of modernity; *kitsch*, in which "the two bitterly conflicting modernities are confronted, as it were, with their own caricature," and in the multifarious variants of Postmodernism (7). Has then this grand drama reached its rather anticlimactic conclusion? Recent history suggests otherwise, that the conflict between the Two Modernities continues unabated, and

[41] The author is indebted to the American cultural critic Thomas Frank for this memorable phrase. For more on this, see his 1997 *Commodify your Dissent: The Business of Culture in the New Gilded Age*.

yet at such a ferocious pace and on such a superficial level as to render it all but a thoroughly empty and meaningless process. That the Two Modernities have at least in our post-1968 era becoming hopelessly intertwined rather goes without saying; one need only to look how quickly the so-called Slacker Ethos of the Cobain 1990s, never a serious form of dissent in the first place, was seamlessly transformed into the myth of the "heroic entrepreneur" of the Silicon Valley and the Pacific Northwest. The current host university of the author, in fact, has recently inaugurated no less than a Center for Disruptive Business, at which young "outlaw" MBAs are trained in the not so gentle arts of Creative Destruction. Modernity will very likely persist in staging and restaging this drama, as Calinescu appears correct in his characterization of what he calls its inescapable deepest vocation, its constitutive sense of creation through rupture and crisis" (92). And yet, it would seem, the returns on this enterprise shall be ever diminishing and evermore devoid of substance.

That figure who has most concerned himself with the concept of modernity in its most comprehensive distillation, and furthermore in a manner much closer to Henningsen, is most certainly Jürgen Habermas. In the first of his lectures on the *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, as well as, moreover, in his Adorno Prize lecture "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," the philosopher offers a significantly reworked formulation of Calinescu's conception of the Two Modernities. In essence, Habermas replaces the Baudelairean notion of aesthetic modernity with the broader definition of Weber, which is rooted in the Kantian diremption of reason into the autonomous "knowledge-complexes" of knowledge/science, ethics/law, and art/aesthetics, each with its own self-perpetuating

expert culture and each, moreover, subject to ever increasing rationalization and thus necessarily presupposing profound rupture with established tradition. Baudelairean aesthetic modernity here, crucially, thus constitutes only a single aspect of the tripartite conception of *cultural* modernity, the other two being of course those of knowledge/science and ethics/law. Baudelaire's concept of bourgeois modernity also undergoes a substantive rethinking, in that Habermas seems to define it more narrowly, associating it more or less exclusively with the relentless process of economic and administrative modernization. In so doing, Habermas seems to remedy the essential oversight in Baudelaire's conception of aesthetic modernity; for all of its sheepish insistence on sobriety and slow and steady progress, the fact remains that the capitalism as practiced by the bourgeoisie represents an equal if not far more destabilizing force than the activities of the most persistent surrealist prankster or social revolutionary. Globalist capitalism has, by all means, done far more to shatter the established lifeways of the city of Detroit than any fallout from the issuing of the Port Huron statement; indeed, we shall return to this theme in the following chapter. Habermas' *economic* modernity is thus revealed to be every bit as rooted in a conception of rupture with historical continuity; the events of the past few years have most certainly confirmed this suspicion.[42] What is it, then, that is the object of the disruption wrought by the advance of capitalism? Here

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[42] For confirmation of this we need only look to the recent outbreak of social unrest during 2011. Apologists of globalist capitalism most certainly pointed to the activities of the European *indignados* as well as, in our part of the world, the occupy movement, as socially disruptive. But it is crucial to recall here that the *indignados* themselves, as well as, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent, the occupy movement, portrayed themselves as relatively innocent victims of the system, e.g. "we have done all you have asked of us, but you have not held up your end of the bargain."

Habermas introduces a third category, that which he terms the historical *lebenswelt*, the everyday existence of a "general public" necessarily dependent on "the ecology of developed forms of social life," whose domain is "oriented toward quite different criteria, namely that of communicative rationality" (*Unfinished Project* 44).

The inherent conflict between the disruptive demands of economic modernity with the need for continuity characteristic of the *lebenswelt* was, as Habermas describes, already foreseen in the Enlightenment, which took as its central (unfinished) project the progressive *elevation* of the dirempted spheres of reason which, in the equally important domain of *praxis*, would increasingly serve to rationalize the *lebenswelt*, in effect mediating the harsher and more debilitating consequences of economic modernization:

> Partisans of the Enlightenment such as Condorcet could still entertain the extravagant expectation that the arts and sciences would not merely promote the control of the forces of nature, but also further the understanding of self and world, the progress of morality, justice in social institutions, and even human happiness. (*Unfinished Project* 45)

The problem, of course, is that this essential optimism of the Enlightenment has ultimately failed to materialize, for as Habermas regretfully reminds us, the specialized activities of the expert cultures have all too often failed to translate into praxis, and thus "the lifeworld, once its traditional substance had been devalued, threatens rather to become *impoverished*" (*Unfinished Project* 45). The context of the failure of the Enlightenment project permits the understanding of Baudelaire's aesthetic revolt against bourgeois modernity as a kind of precursor to that later phenomenon which Habermas terms "the false sublation of culture," which amounts to the essentially futile attempts of the various knowledge-complexes to break out of their specialist cultures in the effort to reach directly

into the *lebenswelt*, in essence bypassing the seemingly iron hold of economic modernity upon modern human being. While Baudelaire, the supreme aristocrat in aesthetics, can himself hardly be associated with such a project as the false sublation of culture, Habermas does indeed largely affirm Calinescu's basic genealogy, in that Baudelaire's radical reworking of time-consciousness would lead directly to the avant-gardes and reach its seeming conclusion in the failure of Surrealism. Where Habermas appears to depart from (or at least supplement) Calinescu is in his explication of the causation of this inevitable frustration. The ultimate failure of Hegel's project, that being the *reunification* of dirempted reason through a reworking of the concept of reason itself, ultimately sets the stage for the development of modernity itself, with its successive attempts at the false sublation of culture to which, as Habermas rightfully notes, the knowledge complex of art/aesthetics appears to be particularly attracted. And yet, as Habermas asserts, such attempts are necessarily doomed to failure, for they necessarily overlook the fact that in so doing they "only substitute one form of one-sidedness and abstraction for another" (*Unfinished Project* 49). At the conclusion of the lecture, Habermas does offer a glimpse, but only a glimpse, of a possible alternative to the false sublation of culture, citing a particularly telling moment from Peter Weiss' *Aesthetic of Resistance*:

> He depicts a group of young people in Berlin in 1937, politically motivated workers who are eager to learn, who are acquiring the means of inwardly understanding the history, including the social history, of European painting through night school classes. Out of the obdurate stone of objective spirit they hew the fragments they are able to appropriate, drawing them into the experiential horizon of their own environment, one which is as remote from traditional education as it is from the existing regime, and turning them this way, they begin to glow. (*Unfinished Project* 52)

Such an enterprise essentially inverts the traditional power dynamics of the transmission of knowledge, which instead of the arbitrary imposition of the expert cultures upon the *lebenswelt*, here function in a manner in which the "*expert culture is appropriated from the perspective of the lifeworld*" (*Unfinished Project* 52). As such they could in fact be termed the *genuine sublation of culture*, a kind of means for circumnavigating the inevitable frustration that has seemingly confronted the project of modernity at every turn.

As Habermas mournfully notes, he does not see the prospects of such an inversion as particularly encouraging, in essence because that process of mutual exhaustion so carefully traced by Calinescu has resulted not in a redoubled commitment to the project of the Enlightenment, but towards an ever increasingly vehement tendency to devalue the project in and of itself. The key development here for Habermas is the growth since the 1950s of the concept of "modernization," which, in removing itself from the historical context of the European Enlightenment, has permitted its exponents in a sense to circumvent Baudelaire's notion of the Two Modernities:

> From this perspective, a self-sufficiently advancing modernization of society has separated itself from the impulses of a cultural modernity that has seemingly become obsolete in the meantime; it only carries out its functional laws of economy and state, technology and science, which are supposed to have amalgamated into a system that cannot be influenced. (*Philosophical Discourse* 3)

In what follows it shall be argued that the Scandinavians, in no small part due to the efforts of Poul Henningsen, have successfully managed to avoid at least in part this most essential of the perils of historical modernity, that being the tendency of the process of modernization to become an end unto itself, seemingly immune to the efforts of *kulturarbejdere* to exercise any kind of meaningful impact upon it. While it must be

conceded that Hennginsen himself, particularly later in life, would ultimately succumb to the temptations of the false sublation of culture, to the sense that art and aesthetics unhinged from praxis can and should solve all of our problems, it is nonetheless apparent that the critic at the very least during the interwar period—and in particular in his seminal *kampskrift Hvad med Kulturen?*—, comes very close to developing a substantive alternative. It is to this text that we now turn.

Hvad med Kulturen? was at the time of its appearance, and arguably still is today, a work of immense curiosity. Any effort to pin down the text with respect to genre classification runs directly up against the author's principle of *kultursammenhængen*, for here PH has indeed "piled up" a rather imposing inventory of thematic concerns. By his own estimation, *Hvad med Kulturen?* is first and foremost a *billedbog* [picture book], a kind of informal survey in brief of recent developments in the pictorial arts, in which the author offers up, as we shall see, a wholly novel reading of the European *avant-gardes*, in particular the all-important Cubist revolution. It is precisely this aspect of the text that strikes us as most contemporary, for the critic's employment of intermediality—nearly every page of the book contains an (often sardonically) captioned image—clearly brings to mind current critical practice so familiar to our electronic age. In the first section of the text, appropriately entitled "Sammenhængen," the art historical survey is largely told through the captions, beginning with a Rembrandt landscape, running through the various 19th century European avant-gardes, before concluding with radical Cubist experimentation in painting as well the changes it inspired in architecture and design in the

immediate postwar period. In the second section, "Virkningen" [effect, impact], Henningsen proceeds to a critical survey of the various political factions of interwar Denmark and their appropriate forms of visual art, beginning with the Conservatives, proceeding through the Venstre, the Radicals and the Social Democrats, and finally concluding with the Communists, the standard bearer of whom Henningsen identifies as no less than Picasso himself. The final section, "Hitlerstilen," constitutes a kind of warning, for in deeply provocative "before and after" couplets, Henningsen presents a series of images demonstrating the impact of Hitler's rise in Germany (*Hvad med Kulturen?* was published in December of 1933, roughly a year after the National Socialist takeover).

It is furthermore customary to identify the text as a *kampskrift*, and Henningsen appears to acknowledge this status in his indication of the text's "two front war":

> Polemically this book is directed on two fronts in the hope of conversion: against the many Marxists, who shove the problem of culture to the side as subordinate and unimportant—and against the many culturally inclined who look with apprehension or indifference upon the political. (*Kulturkritik II* 12)

Henningsen's attempt here to claim for himself a measure of ideological even-handedness is more than a little disingenuous, for as much as the text is properly understood to be a *kampskrift*, it is also very much an effort at peacemaking, specifically with the Communists, whom PH had in recent years subjected to rather serious measures of provocation and outright torment. Two instances come to mind immediately, the first the aforementioned "salon communist" scandal at the conclusion of the 1920s and into the new decade. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, Henningsen's provocations in the pages of *Kritisk Revy* had engendered perhaps the most devastating PH-indictment of all, courtesy of the

Social Democratic intellectual and committed Marxist Hartvig Frisch. As Morten Thing recalls, "Frisch answered . . . [that] it was an aristocratic socialism that would prescribe for the proletariat what was good for them. PH would simply put the workers into row houses illuminated by PH-lamps" ("Poul Henningsen" 234). Henningsen was by no means chastised by this, as is evidenced by an address he gave at the Studentersamfund in 1931, in which, even more provocatively, he would assert that "the only thing a modern youth with respect for himself can be is a communist" (Thing "Poul Henningsen" 235). This rather demeaning utterance would bring about a further condemnation from the jurist Poul Skadhauge, who bitingly defined a "salon communist" as "a person who looks with sympathy on the 'Communists' without however pretending to fulfill the first condition of belonging to them: being a worker" (Thing "Poul Henningsen" 236). It was also in 1931 that Henningsen would further infuriate the Communists by his conduct in what has come to be known as the Nakskov Affair, a labor demonstration in the Lolland shipbuilding community that ended in ruthless suppression by the military and as well in the imprisonment of numerous leaders of the action. A committee to support the jailed workers was quickly formed, with Henningsen as its leader, and it is at this precise moment, as Hans Hertel notes, that the Danish public comes to associate the figure of Henningsen with the Communists; as the editor of *Social Demokraten* would caustically remark, Henningsen had now revealed himself to be "the bourgeoisie's most insipid amusement clown" who was "now playing Communist" (*PH* 168). Henningsen would answer his critics by doubling down, in an act of crass self-promotion seemingly designed to provoke the ethic of self-abnegation of the Communists, a veritable Deon Sanders

moment, all the more remarkable given the age in which it was carried out. Among the members of the support committee was the aviation hero A. Botved, a kind of Danish Charles Lindbergh, albeit of the opposite political persuasion. In order to deliver speeches in support of the imprisoned in both Nakskov and Copenhagen on the same day, Henningsen arranged to be air lifted by Botved, all the while dumping handbills from the aircraft across the Danish landscape. *Hvad med Kulturen?* should in some sense be understood to be a kind of communist apologia on the part of Henningsen, a sincere effort to bring himself into alignment with the party that he would ultimately never, as his detractors on the Far Left would constantly remind him, choose to join. The real, front and center object of the polemic in this most polemical of texts, is in fact the Social Democrats, as is evidenced by the back cover graphic, which depicts Hitler and numerous other Nazi lowlights literally growing out from the bald crown of Stauning himself.

Pictorial art history, *kampskrift*, apologia, *Hvad med Kulturen?* is indeed all these things at once, and yet it also, together with the aforementioned essay on "Tradition og modernisme," one of the few texts in which Henningsen presents something at least approaching a comprehensive theory of the aesthetic. We shall return to this at length in the following section, but for now it is important to shed light on a single crucial insight in the text which serves to distinguish Henningsen from the continental Modernist tradition inaugurated by Baudelaire and receiving its most comprehensive explication in Calinescu. In the *Salon of 1846* Baudelaire had famously defined the beautiful as possessed of "an element of the eternal and an element of the transitory" (117). The process by which great art is made, once again, is conceived of as one of *distillation*, in which the artist seeks to

uncover the eternal (and unchanging) aspect of beauty within the cloak of presentness; as Calinescu observes, Baudelaire "represents the intriguing moment when the old notion of universal beauty had shrunk enough to reach a delicate equilibrium with its modern counterconcept, the beauty of transitoriness" (4). Baudelaire's aesthetics, as profoundly disruptive as they are, should properly be understood, within the grand scheme of things, to be in their essence relatively conservative, in that it is ultimately the eternal and unchanging laws of beauty (albeit cloaked in the present) which remain as the ultimate standard by which all genuine art is to be judged. Recall here that the Salons themselves, with respect to their outlining of a general theory of artistic production, amount to a series of strictures to be placed upon the "governance of the imagination;" it must also be observed here that the poet composed the lion's share of his oeuvre in perfectly rendered alexandrines. In a crucial passage in *Hvad med Kulturen?* Henningsen appears to avow the Baudelairean notion of artistic production as the distillation of the eternal, and yet his actual understanding of the eternal element of beauty is fundamentally distinct:

> There is found something in common in all art, an effort to free humanity from society's constraint and slavery. But this solidarity is something quite intangible, which in and of itself also characterizes science and politics . . . All art even down to the most abstract as music and Cubist painting deals with the conditions of life. (*Kulturkritik II* 14).

This is a vision of the aesthetic as profoundly *socialized*, it is art in service of the emancipatory project, here in its specifically individualist iteration. As Calinescu explains, the unfolding of aesthetic modernity after Baudelaire would largely be the story of the gradual crowding out of the eternal in beauty in favor of the cult of the new as the new itself becomes a kind of end in itself, increasingly divorced from the historical *lebenswelt*

and from the domain of praxis, to invoke Habermas' language. In Henningsen the imperative of the new is profoundly altered, for the new is in effect characterized as virtually the same as the emancipatory.

As has been readily admitted, Henningsen is no systematic crafter of tightly argued treatises; *Hvad med Kulturen?* appropriately enough opens with a brief introductory section that even upon repeated readings can appear all but hopelessly "piled up" and thematically incoherent. We begin with a series of rhetorical questions to which the author himself provides the answers:

> Is there coming a barbarism or a new flowering of culture? Probably no one can answer that, but one can see how it will go if events trend in the direction of Germany, in the direction of Russia, or if there is a more peaceful development of Danish politics up to the present. What does politics have to do with art and culture? Is art not something eternal that unfolds its tree regardless of tyrants and regimes? No, it is by no means that. The life conditions of culture are determined by the economic. That about an autonomous art is a beautiful dream that lives in the minds of many. It has nothing to do with reality. There are reasons to look at the conditions of culture today and mull over where they are heading. (*Kulturkritik II* 11)

Thus from the very start Henningsen's two front strategy is apparent, for in sharp contrast to the DKP party line of the day the critic, rather presciently, does not shy away from associating the barbarism of Stalin with that of Hitler. And yet at the same time PH decisively avows the central tenet of Marxist aesthetic and cultural theory, just as vehemently writing off any notion of an autonomous sphere of art independent of social and political conditions. The latter point indicates that *Hvad med Kulturen?* belongs to that domain that would decades later come to dominate nearly the entirety of Danish academic

discourse, namely that of *ideologikritik.* In surveying the Danish ideological spectrum at the conclusion of 1933, Henningsen again astutely identifies a prevailing air of extreme polarization:

> From a parliamentarianism full of medium tones we now find ourselves in sharply opposed relation between the revolutionary minded Marxists and the reactionary fascism. The great inert bloc is the Social Democrats, who now take upon the place of the reform Venstre, the center. One can describe politics in three colors, red, green and black: Marxism, social democracy and reaction. (*Kulturkritik II* 12)

Upon this continuum Henningsen himself should be situated somewhere between the social democrats and the Marxists, or, to use his preferred metaphor, fundamentally *above* these two factions. In a final prescient moment, the critic observes that the economic collapse of 1929 has fundamentally *neutered* the social democratic center, strengthening, paradoxically enough, both the revolutionary Left as well as the reactionary Right. And yet PH by no means here throws himself into the (less than welcoming) arms of the communists, for they just as much as the social democrats have fundamentally ignored the question of culture:

> The Marxist does not doubt that matters are trending toward the proletariat's overtaking of power. The economic signs and the historical laws say to him, that sooner or later it must happen. An investigation of the situation of culture . . . has therefore less interest for him. He gladly proceeds from the conviction that the culture follows the political situation. Observations should therefore remind him more that although the conclusion is given, there can be both favorable and unfavorable winds. (*Kulturkritik II* 12)

Cultural policy, it is asserted, can not only impact the pace of social change, but can even serve to tip the balance toward Left or Right. Nowhere is this more evident than in Germany, where the Nazis unlike the social democrats well understood the significance of

culture; it is at this point that the critic makes the boldest of his assertions, claiming in effect that the Nazi rise to power was made possible only by the *neglect* of the question of culture by the German social democrats. As has been indicated elsewhere, this is an eventuality which Henningsen is determined to prevent from occurring in Denmark, and herein is found the essence of his "two front" strategy; on the one hand *Hvad med Kulturen?* constitutes an appeal to those already firmly within the camp of the Left, the culturally disinclined Marxist revolutionaries, while on the other PH equally seeks to convert the politically uncommitted middle class intellectuals whose interest in art is greatest and in whom, not coincidentally, the conviction that art is essentially independent of social and economic conditions is most pronounced. With respect to this latter group Henningsen seeks to overcome its fundamental suspicion that the political triumph of the proletariat constitutes in its essence a dire threat to culture itself: "For those who concern themselves with art . . . many natural sympathizers are turned off from Marxism for fear of barbarism" (*Kulturkritik II* 13). Not so, Henningsen argues, for the "clear-seeing," that is to say, *culturally informed Marxist,* understands well enough that "if the proletariat does not emerge, then the culture seriously goes under" (*Kulturkritik II* 13).

As has been indicated, the first section of *Hvad med Kulturen?* constitutes an imaginative reinterpretation of European art history since the Gothic period, a rethinking which serves to begin to distinguish Henningsen's larger thinking from that of the more celebrated continental variants of the philosophical discourse of modernity. Henningsen's survey is structured by two central contentions, the first relatively unassuming and more

or less in line with Baudelaire, the second much more substantial and, it must be admitted, rather muddled. In the first place the critic observes that a given artistic epoch is possessed of art that is conservative and backward looking as well as art that is progressive and looks to the future. In the Gothic era art existed principally for the glorification of the Church, whose power was on the rise, while in the subsequent Baroque it was the rising absolute monarchy that determined form and content. In the early phases of these eras the ruling ideology served a *generative* purpose, contributing to the production of art both forward looking and of lasting value, yet each age was equally marked by a point at which the governing power *ceased to provide the conditions* for such: "There must have been times when art was out front and participated actively in the securing of the new Church's power, and other times when it had conservatively stiffened and only preserved a tradition that was now attacked by new art" (*Kulturkritik II* 15). Turning to more recent history, Henningsen sees a similar arc of development in the 19th century, when the emerging bourgeoisie in its effort to emancipate itself from the strictures of feudalism attempted to inaugurate its own artistic forms, namely in the aforementioned *plyssesstil*, to which in this context the critic refers (without a hint of irony) as a "more honest and better bourgeois art" (*Kulturkritik II* 23). The *plyssesstil* corresponds to the period of bourgeois ascendancy, which Henningsen asserts roughly concluded around the turn of the 20th century, after which the bourgeoisie, entering into its period of decline over against the rising proletariat, effectively lost confidence in itself and reverted to the monstrosities of neoclassicism. The central question, then, that governs the critic's inquiry into the history of art, be it earlier

eras or more importantly the recent past and present, is then this: "What art corresponds to conservative politics, and what points forward?" (*Kulturkritik II* 15).

In the second place Henningsen offers a far more problematic assertion, again treading the perilously thin line between the opposite poles of his two front strategy. In essence, the critic suggests that art, in contrast to so much of his thinking during the *Kritisk Revy* period, cannot directly effect change in society, and yet at the same time forward looking art is possessed of a kind of *prophetic* quality:

> If art cannot be used for anything else, then it by all means serves as the finest barometer. Naturally both the movement for sexual emancipation as well as the *friluftsbevægelse* are results of economic development and not of any literary or painterly tomfoolery. But that does not change the fact that art can foresee for us the coming developments in the economic. (*Kulturkritik II* 20).

Nothing too controversial here, yet the critic's two examples appear to directly contradict one other. With respect to the latter, the *friluftsbevægelse*, Henningsen identifies the Impressionist movement of the late 19th century as the primary agent of artistic prophesy, albeit his appreciation of it is severely qualified. On the one hand Impression anticipated both the political rise of the *bønder* as reflected in the *systemskift* of 1904—here the critic notes with approval the Impressionist's preference for the agricultural landscape over and above the old Romantic/ heroic landscapes of the recent past—, while on the other the Impressionists presaged the coming demand for universal access to nature. And yet at the same time Impressionism was possessed of a profoundly reactionary tendency in that it indirectly lead to the movement for nature conservancy, of which PH, rather obstinately, at

least when viewed from our contemporary perspective, was so roundly dismissive.[43] The salient point here is that the critic with respect to the role of Impressionism in effecting social change does not appear to assign any form of direct agency; art here is valuable in its capacity to provide glimpses of the future. And yet with respect to sexual emancipation, the critic appears to suggest that art in this case did in fact directly contribute to social transformation:

> Denmark's sexual emancipation, which also is of great political value because it is directed against conservatism, was carried out by literature without any sort of support from the political parties aside from the little Radical party—in the beginning. Certainly all sorts of bourgeois ridiculousness attached itself to this struggle, but it is more valuable to point to the revolution in the manner of thinking— and on a parallel with what has happened in the same area in the Soviet Union. (*Kulturkritik II* 17)

This is not, strictly speaking, to make the stronger suggestion that anything other than changes in the economic base of society ultimately were responsible for sexual emancipation, and yet Henningsen does here seem to concede at least a quantitatively greater agency to Ibsen, Brandes and all of the other partisans of the Great Nordic War over Sexual Morality.

It is when the critic arrives at the Cubist period that we can begin to see the outline of a qualitative leap in Henningsen's view of the capacity for art to directly bring about social change, to fundamentally transform both the way we think and we live, and it is

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[43] Henningsen, the supremely modern of aesthetes, did not fundamentally distinguish between the desire to preserve the (defunct, according to his view of things) buildings of the past and the desire to preserve the natural world against the encroachments of human progress. PH was many things, but environmentalist he most certainly was not. See Hertel *PH* 41-3 and 377-80 for more on the critic's much-maligned *fredningsfob*i [conservation phobia].

furthermore precisely here that PH begins to depart substantially from the conceptions of the unfolding of historical modernity in Calinescu and in Habermas. Both the latter mentioned view the Cubist revolt, perhaps the most militant of the *avant-gardes* after, of course, Surrealism, as ultimately a failure; for Habermas in particular Cubism amounts to yet another attempt at the false sublation of culture, a one-sided and ultimately misguided attempt to break out of the expert culture of aesthetics and into the historical *lebenswelt*. Yet for Henningsen this breaking out is precisely that at which Cubism succeeded, for the Cubist revolt has resulted in no less than an absolute sweeping away of all prior conceptions of art; indeed, as Henningsen remarks, "it is all but impossible to explain to contemporary youth what the conception of beauty was before Cubism, so thoroughly has it found its way into the blood" (*Kulturkritik II* 20). For Henningsen, crucially, the success of the Cubists rests not in the establishment of new *forms* or new *content*, but on the contrary in a revolution in the very *materials* with which art is produced.:

> That which was lacking for the creation of a new culture was a complete revision of the question: What is beautiful, what is ugly? This must have been precisely the task of painting, and the French Cubists carried forth the greatest aesthetic revolution in historical time. All the way back from Egyptian art beauty had been indistinguishably linked with power, magnificence and costliness. It had never ever been the property of the people, but always the privilege of those in power . . . With Cubism it was for the first time ripped loose from the ruling class and costliness and sought out in the ordinary, daily life . . . what was new was that it should now not be the few who should enjoy the privilege at the expense of the many. Therefore art could no longer be sought in the traditional basis. For it is in the nature of the matter, that the rare and the costly cannot be the property of everyone. While the conception of beauty had previously undergone a revision, it must now be revolutionized at its core. (*Kulturkritik II* 23-5)

Although Henningsen concedes that Cubism found its origins in high theory, he insists however that the movement was in fact a bottom-up phenomenon, corresponding directly

to the rise of the proletariat, which through the media of Picasso and Braque effectively staked its claim to that which had previously been denied it; recall here Habermas' invocation of Peter Weiss' Berlin workers. In the postwar era, the Cubist revolution would make its way into everyday life primarily through the establishment of a new kind of ornamentation. Before the First World War, before Cubism, ornamentation had primarily been a function of the static, the decorative and the symmetrical, while in the postwar period ornamentation had become the domain of the transitory, the raw, the undecorated; the new sensibility, according to Henningsen, is everywhere apparent in the new urbanism, right down to the decoration of shop windows, of which the critic provides telling before and after images.

As bullish as Henningsen is on the impact of Cubism, he regretfully concedes that "the great majority of contemporary people are in the meantime not culturally modern and allow themselves to be meekly deceived by a magnificence that has always been hostile towards the people" (*Kulturkritik II* 28). Even the Soviet Union is not immune to the temptations of *pragt*:

> There is in Tsarskoye Selo in Leningrad a room completely in amber and gold, which Is so odious that one is seized to desire that the Soviets had leveled it down to the Earth. That would naturally have been wrong. Let it instead be presented as a shuddering reminder of a barbaric time. (*Kulturkritik II* 28).

The Cubist revolution is thus necessarily incomplete and, moreover, as Henningsen also readily concedes, has not resulted in a corresponding social revolution, and yet this is all the more reason that the political struggle must be supported by an aggressive *kulturkamp*. The task of criticism, once again, is to identify that which falsely masquerades as

progressive but is in fact conservative from that small measure of artistic production that genuinely points forward.[44] Thus that which was begun by Picasso and Braque remains an unfinished project in and of itself, an ongoing effort at, to cite the opening program article in *Kritisk Revy*, awakening "the universal understanding, without which a movement is without value" (*Kulturkritik I* 49). The task of reshaping bourgeois civilization, therefore, is not according to Henningsen's thinking entirely a bottom up enterprise, on the order of Peter Weiss' Berlin laborers. There is and remains an essential role for the experts, and yet this role is a far cry from the wholly top down efforts characteristic of attempts at the false sublation of culture at least on two counts. In the first place Henningsen's conception of modern art is inclusive enough to avoid the essential "one-sidedness" of all attempts at false sublation. It must be recalled here that his identification of that art which is most pertinent in this time of upheaval is precisely the *applied* arts; in this way PH seems to make a place for the first of Habermas' knowledge complexes, that of knowledge and science, as is most certainly evident in his afore-cited program for the training of architects. The second of the knowledge complexes, that of law and ethics, is also accounted for here, specifically in the critic's insistence that the imperative of the functional is in its very essence a *moral* imperative.[45] And in the second place, Henningsen's insistence on this

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[44] Echoing the extreme exclusivity of both Kant in the *Third Critique* and Baudelaire in the salons, Henningsen here suggests that the vast majority of art is ultimately conservative and serves primarily the preservation of the existing order. Indeed, the critic concludes the section by asserting that fully 99% of artistic production constitutes "a pure and dreary expression of the age without a glimpse of hope for a better future" (*Kulturkritik II* 35).

[45] In yet another of the axiomatic statements of the essay on "Tradition og modernisme," Henninsgen states this with immense forcefulness: The artist who occupies himself with

(ethical] primacy of the task, of the function, further serves to circumvent Habermas' observation that attempts at the false sublation of culture invariably conclude, in spite of the best intentions, in a complete divorce from the domain of praxis. It must be conceded here, once again, that the particular artistic program presented here should not be too closely associated with Habermas' brief reflections on what could be termed the *genuine* sublation of culture; this is by no means, strictly speaking, a thoroughly bottom up enterprise. And yet it cannot be denied that in spite of the persistence of the role of experts, much of the worst aspects of false sublation are here avoided.

It is in the second section of *Hvad med Kulturen?*, in which Henningsen charts the outlines of the contemporary *kulturkamp* as he sees it, that the critic's delicate balancing act between his earlier advocacy of bourgeois individualist emancipation and his later efforts on behalf of Marxist class emancipation reaches something resembling a reconciliation. The text should in fact, as Morten Thing has observed, be understood to be the "highpoint of Poul Henningsen's rapprochement with and consent to communism," and not only because it was conceived of precisely as such.[46] Henningsen begins with a further nod to Marxist aesthetics, conceding that the *cultural situation* always lags behind that of the economic; hence the paradoxical and regrettable situation that although the

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applied art cannot curtail that part of the of the content of the task that regards the application. This is a moral demand." *Kulturkritik I* 70.

[46] *Hvad med Kulturen?* was published, largely at the behest of the conciliator Hans Kirk, on the communist-affiliated Monde imprint; as such it was construed by contemporaries as an effort to bridge what remained of the gap between the freethinkers/ cultural radicals and the Marxists. For more on this see Thing "Poul Henningsen" 236.

bourgeoisie has entered into its period of decline, the emerging working class continues to mimic the culture of the bourgeois. And yet at the same time the critic qualifies this observation by asserting that there does exist a tiny measure of artistic *production* that has indeed risen to the historical occasion:

> This applies naturally only to that art that dares to be called modern and revolutionary, that is to say not only pictures with revolutionary content—they can from the artistic point of view many times be seen to be right out conservative—but namely those pictures in which it is not the narrative that corresponds to the revolutionary manner of thinking, but the painterly itself. (*Kulturkritik II* 37)

Henningsen here refers to that exceedingly (one per cent of total output, in fact) rare art in which the revolutionary *content* is matched by equally revolutionary *form*; it is this kind of artistic production that Henningsen seeks, and ultimately finds lacking, in contemporary Denmark. Because of the dearth of such art in the interwar cultural field, it is therefore the essential task of the critic to promote and to advocate for its increased presence.

Henningsen follows up these initial considerations with a survey of the contemporary art scene, largely told through the captioned images on each page as well as, in accordance with the practice of *ideologikritik*, organized by political affiliation. The Conservatives, understandably enough, are given relatively short shrift, for the decade of the 1930s was a long period in the wilderness for them. Theirs has always been and remains up to the present an art that serves to glorify "the august pillars of society, the guardians of morality" (*Kulturkritik II* 36). Turning to the more influential parties, the critic observes in language sure to infuriate each side, that both the Center Right Venstre party as well as the ruling Social Democrats have always and continue to pursue a cultural strategy that is significantly to the Right of their respective political programs. The critic does identify a

measure of hope on the part of the Social Democrats, citing Julius Bomholt's aforementioned *Arbejderkultur* as well as Arne Sørensen's monograph on functionalism (both of which, it is important to recall here, Henningsen was severely critical in his reviews), but ultimately he sees these initial efforts as insufficient to the task, as going no further than the futile attempts of Germany's own Center Left coalition government in the previous decade. With respect to the Radicals, Henningsen observes that situation is precisely the opposite, that the their cultural program has come be to be significantly forward of their political configuration; for PH their principal value exists in discerning which aspects of bourgeois culture must be carried over into the emerging new social order. None of these particular configurations, however, are judged to be up to the central task at hand, namely the providing of a cultural basis for resisting the encroachments of fascism.

For a kind of art that does measure up to this challenge, Henningsen here places his faith in the tiny communist faction, albeit with strict qualifications:

> We then in reality find ourselves in our parliamentary society in the situation that the 99 per cent of art, the conservative, is today a daily, brilliant political propaganda, while the party of progress is not at all stirred to action. If one could cut out the conservative aspect of art it would without a doubt result directly in an increased vote for the revolutionaries. It is therefore on the forehand natural to believe that revolutionary art, the one per cent, has a corresponding significance. (*Kulturkritik II* 43)

The majority of communist art, as is evident from this, is just as conservative as all the rest, for its is only progressive with respect to its content, while the question of form is largely deemed irrelevant; Henningsen here reproduces a cartoon by the communist illustrator Anton Hansen, in which an impoverished family prepares to roast a rat for Christmas

dinner, as particularly damning evidence of this tendency. The communists would do better, it seems, to emulate the Cubists, as has appropriately been the case in much of Soviet art:

> Direct propaganda art, which excites so many Marxists, functions most convincingly on those who are in agreement with the artist beforehand and therefore has not so great a trenchancy as one assigns it. The Cubism that Bracque and Picasso started in Paris has cultivated a better ground for communism than all the depictions of hunger and need. (*Kulturkritik II* 44).

Henningsen next directly address the fear of the communists that any expenditure of effort in the cultural sphere risks detracting from the primary political struggle. The critic concedes that both communism and fascism thrive in conditions of economic crisis, of *need*, and yet, at the same time he further asserts that unlike fascism, communism with respect to the cultural situation benefits from *sophistication*. Thus it is all the more incumbent upon the communists to pursue aggressively a forward-looking cultural program:

> We can answer that by virtue of humane grounds we must make the revolutionary human being as rounded and as richly cultivated as possible, and we must believe that this is also politically correct. We are required to meet the universal thirst for art and culture with the answer that there is to be found a possibility and that there is no other possibility for the renewal of the sick culture than the revolutionary. (*Kulturkritik II* 45)

Henningsen proceeds to the previously cited recounting of his own journey into the labor movement, from politically disinclined *kulturarbjeder* to class warrior, by virtue of the concept of *kultursammenhængen*, which lead him to the realization that the more deeply he delved into his own particular area of specialization (architecture), the more his thinking was drawn outward into the social. It is as this very point that the critic offers up his curious version of a kind of communist apologia, noting in effect that while he had once

naively placed his faith in the possibilities of the new urbanism, he has now recognized that capitalism may only be reformed through revolutionary activity:

> I believed once that urban society could be brought to a rational realization on its own, but I learned after a years' long campaign, that the city's wasting of values and possibilities of existence is a necessary consequence of capitalist society, for which the Social Democrats are such prudent and wise carriage drivers. When one has investigated how in the questions of Copenhagen's new harbor the funds of the commune and the city's well-being have been swindled so that certain speculators could earn money on their shares, one either becomes an idealist, a grumbler or a Marxist . . . Later it has been demonstrated how the Soviets work energetically at urban planning, while the effort to make the city into a work of art in most of the rest of the world is conducted by idealists and grumblers without result. (*Kulturkritik II* 46).

For Henningsen, however absurdly improbable enough, the road toward Marxist communism seems to have lead directly through failed urban planning projects, an origin story for the ages if ever there was one! And yet by all accounts the critic's behavior in the ensuing years was that of a loyal and ardent supporter of the DKP, if in fact he never did formally join up; this period of warming relations would last through the war, up until the question of the German refugees would provoke a second split with the communists, before the third and final divorce wrought by the revelations of Kruschev in 1956.[47] Henningsen concludes the section with an assessment of the contemporary *kulturkamp* with an eye to the near future: either the Left will continue in its negligence thereby permitting the

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[47] In 1945 it was the communists, who had suffered perhaps more than anyone under the German occupation, who called for the most severe treatment of the many German refuges who found themselves in Denmark as well as those Danes accused of collaboration. Henningsen would resist the desire for retributive tribunals in a series of essays from 1946, many of them directed at an openly hostile Hans Kirk; this flurry of activity would culminate in the critic's 1947 debate with the pro-Soviet professor Albert Olsen, in which PH offered up his own version of radical democracy over against Soviet communism. For more on the tribunals see Thing "PH" 247-9 and Lylloff 226-38.

currently culturally conservative worker to become *politically* conservative, or the Marxists shall join forces with sympathetic *kulturarbejder*e in leading the workers toward a cultural progressivism. Make socialist man *now*, in spite of the hostile conditions of capitalism and of reaction, this is the central imperative of *Hvad med Kulturen*?

If the second section of *Hvad med Kulturen?* deals primarily with outlining a relatively concrete strategy for a reenergized *kulturkamp* in the face of rising fascism, then the third and final section, entitled appropriately enough "Hitlerstilen," addresses the possible consequences of continued inactivity on the part of the Left. The portrait of Denmark at the conclusion of 1933 presented by the critic is alarming indeed, for the critic suggests no less than that "the twilight is well under way in Denmark. We are heading at full speed into the hole of intellectual eclipse" (Kulturkritik II 50). Recalling Brandes' 1871 lecture, in which the critic had asserted that in every instance in which Denmark comes into contact with world history the Danes tend to latch on only to the waves of regression, Henningsen suggests that the rightward drift of contemporary Danish political culture is governed by a self-reinforcing reactionary tendency: "There is something curious about this *realpolitik* . . . Every time one claims that it is the realities that must determine the course—it goes to the Right" (*Kulturkritik II* 51). Art in such an intellectually toxic climate is hardly the only casualty, for here Henningsen, in perhaps the text's most oft-cited passage, offers up a long inventory of values—a kind of portrait of the cultural radical program in miniature—that face virtual extinction if the forces of progress do not rise to the occasion:

> We have spoken of art as a barometer . . . but thereafter comes a series of other cultural things such as personal freedom, freethinking, tolerance, a sense of justice, class equalization, an honest sexual morality, internationalism, irreligiosity—in short, the entirety of democracy's bright summer program. (*Kulturkritik II* 51)

Much of this summer program, Henningsen readily concedes, can be attributed to the influence of the bourgeoisie during the period of economic expansion from the conclusion of the First World War up until 1929. Like Habermas, Henningsen should properly be understood as a Marxist-leaning thinker who *appreciates* the historical role of the bourgeoisie in bringing about progress and who takes the project of determining which aspects of bourgeois culture must be carried over into the new society seriously. While the bourgeois ruling class had indeed contributed dramatically to the emancipatory project throughout the 1920s, its role as agent of social change has, with the advent of the world economic crisis, largely concluded: "In periods of economic growth the surface melts away and little radical flowers bloom. They fall with the first overnight frost. At that moment the bourgeois' drawing book is empty, he is and must be conservative" (*Kulturkritik II* 51). Henningsen has here suggested a fundamental disjunction between his conceptions of the economic and the cultural. On the one hand he avows the central Marxist contention regarding economic crisis, that it is in periods of economic upheaval and retraction that the conditions for revolutionary social change are most friendly—we shall return to this in the following chapter on Hans Kirk. And yet the cultural situation is precisely the inverse, for it seems that economic chaos does not necessarily provide the conditions for cultural progress, but on the contrary, for regression:

> During economic fair winds bourgeois culture dissolves itself voluntarily, the ideal of class crumbles, cohesiveness is broken down . . . Now, when the crisis has shaken

> the economic foundation, we cannot expect more dissolution. Now comes bourgeois culture's renaissance: class narrowness, racial hatred, nationalism, religiosity, romanticism, chastity—everything we thought had gone away returns still stronger. (*Kulturkritik II* 53).

The critic's ensuing portrait of Danish culture under the post-1929 bourgeois resurgence curiously recalls Bredsdorff's rendering of mid-1950s England and Denmark: "The youth are seized by religious mysticism, not directly in the form of divine pictures, but in the form of the foggy, the dark, sentiment, "inwardness" (*Kulturkritik II* 56). Henningsen does identify certain encouraging signs, among them the youth's embrace of jazz, of functionalism and of sexual emancipation, conceding that it will be difficult for the reactionary tide to turn back the clock in these important domains. But all in all these advances persist under increasingly perilous conditions:

> The attacks on jazz and modern dance will gain momentum . . . [they] shall now be replaced with the military stiffness of the old dance and music . . . The repertory of the theatre is headed in the same direction as puffed sleeves and corsets. Dollar princesses and bowers and historical stories of lies . . . Twenty happy years of cultural history, in which art pried itself free of capitalism, in which women became comrades and equals, in which morality became the servant of humanity, now stands for a fall. (*Kulturkritik II* 59)

Here is Poul Henningsen, Henningsen the quintessential *lysbringer*, at his darkest and gloomiest. And yet, happily enough, the subsequent history of Denmark reveals that the lion's share of this doomsday prophesying did not in fact come to pass. The aforementioned establishment in 1935 of the anti-fascist front Frisindet Kulturkamp, in which cultural radical and doctrinaire Marxist set aside their differences in the name of national unity, *did* in fact make an impact. The rising tide of "crypto-fascism" in the Denmark of the 1930s was indeed successfully resisted, although it may be a bit of a stretch

to credit the activities of the anti-fascists as the decisive factor in this ultimate victory, as Bredsdorff, the most bullish of the veterans of the interwar *kulturkamp*, most certainly does.

Chapter Three: Hans Kirk

There are no more races to be run

There are no more numbers to be won

Everybody's down we pulled each other down.

--Ian Mackaye

It must first be conceded here that Hans Rudolf Kirk, unlike most certainly Poul Henningsen, should not be considered to be a cultural radical *par excellence*. While his connections with the movement, especially to Henningsen and to Gelsted, are substantial and long lasting, and while he regularly contributes to its principal journals, the general course of Kirk's thinking and work departs from what could be called "mainstream" cultural radicalism on a number of important points. In the first place Kirk's particular path towards cultural radicalism is effectively the inverse of that in Henningsen, who as has been demonstrated initially construed himself as an *aesthetic* revolutionary and only later developed toward political and social engagement. Kirk, in contrast, has his origins in a profound sense of *social indignation*, which appears to have developed in him from a very early age. In Hans Kirk we thus find the delicate balance between individual and class emancipation in the thinking of Henningsen fundamentally altered, for in Kirk the project of individual emancipation is decidedly *subordinate* to that of class struggle. It is also important to observe here that the ongoing development of Kirk's thinking follows a different course from that of Henningsen; his most recent biographer has in fact aptly

characterized this development as a journey *through* Neo-Kantianism and cultural radicalism toward Marxist communism, a position from which he would never depart after his formal induction into the DKP in 1931 (Thing *Hans Kirk* 65). As Morten Thing demonstrates, the years immediately after the crash of 1929 mark the point at which cultural radicalism and communism are most attuned to one another, sharing a view of the Soviet Union as "a kind of modernist artwork on a social scale" (*Hans Kirk* 128). But this would not always prove to be case, in particular after the Soviet invasions of Poland and Finland in 1939, which briefly led to official censorship of the communist press. In a deeply embittered essay of 1941 Hans Kirk specifically critiques the cultural radicals, or as they were known at the time, the freethinkers, for their failure to protest this fracturing of the unity of the anti-fascist front *Frisindet Danmark*. Of the radical tradition stretching back to Brandes Kirk laments that "it began on a high horse and it ended in the circus ring, and such will every cultural movement end, as long as the cultural worker has not learned to take his work as seriously as a navvy or concrete worker or smith takes his" (*Frisindet* 91). And it should also be noted that Hans Kirk stands apart from all of the other figures associated with cultural radicalism in his stubborn refusal to renounce Stalinism after the famous speech of Krushchev in 1956, a decisive event in the history of cultural radicalism that resulted in the founding of the Socialistik Folkeparti in 1959, which Peter Madsen describes as the movement's "coming to itself again" (319).

Hans Rudolf Kirk was, according to his memoir *Skyggespil* [*Shadow Play*, 1953], the product of two very different worlds. His father, Doctor Christen Kirk, hailed from the fishing village of Harboøre on the rugged and unforgiving terrain of Jutland's west coast.

From family holidays young Hans would come to know intimately the religion of the hardscrabble Harboøre fisherfolk, that of the pietistic sect Indre Mission, according to which the figure of Jesus "is strong and demands prayer and penitence and submission;" among the poor of Harboøre "it is terribly difficult to avoid Hell and the Devil, and one must wash oneself in the blood of the lamb" (*Skyggespil* 68-9). His mother, Anna Johanne Andersen, in sharp contrast came from a large and prosperous farm near the Limfjord in Thy in northwestern Jutland; of the religion of this side of his family Kirk remarks that theirs "was an all-fatherly old peasant god" and that "after a blissful death one goes to heaven, provided that one just has conducted oneself reasonably well among people" (*Skyggespil* 68-9). His debut novel *Fiskerne* [*The Fisherman*, 1928], which introduced the genre of the collective novel into Norden and remains, improbably enough given the author's communist sympathies, the best selling Danish novel of all time, effectively unites these two worlds, narrating the story of the flight of an Indre Mission fishing community from the poverty of the west coast to the more abundant inland waters of the Limfjord, where their severe form of religious faith immediately comes into conflict with the more forgiving Grundtvigianism of the region's prior inhabitants. With respect to the sharp class distinction between his father's and mother's families, his biographer and longtime friend Werner Thierry notes that young Hans in his own mind rather seamlessly mediated their differences, locating "behind them a deep, common tradition" of a proud and independent peasant culture (9). This profound sense of rootedness in the rural milieu of his birth, this reflexive and thorough going *folkelighed*, serves to further distinguish Hans Kirk from his cultural radical contemporaries, most prominently from Henningsen, Denmark's first great

prophet of urban modernity; it should also be observed here that the author's rural orientation also sets him apart from rather more orthodox Marxists, in that he predominately views the class struggle in late industrializing Denmark as a matter concerning what he terms the *landproletariat*, the great mass of landless agricultural workers whose story he chronicles in his collective novels of the 1930s, *Daglejene* [*The Day Laborers*, 1936] and *De ny tider* [*The New Times*, 1939], to which we shall shortly turn at length. As a Marxist committed to the class emancipation of the rural day laborer, Kirk is of course deeply critical of the landowning farmers who exploit them; hence he rather chillingly invokes the language of Stalin in an important essay of 1927: "*bønderne er vore farligste fjender*"—the farmers are our most dangerous enemy (*Frisindet* 28). And yet underlying this there is an unmistakable sense of reverence for a common *bondekultur* that transcends class divisions, as is memorably expressed in *Skyggespil*: "in the old peasant life there is a cultural inheritance which must not be forgotten, an integrity of temperament, an honest acumen and independence" (53).

Two oft-cited stories from the memoir demonstrate that the profound feeling of social indignation that would ultimately lead Hans Kirk to the Far Left of the Danish labor movement was present from a very early age.[48] As the child of a country doctor who, significantly, was politically aligned with the Radikale Venstre, thereby providing a link to the earlier form of Brandesian radicalism, young Hans and his brother would frequently accompany his father on sick visits around the family's hometown of Hadsund in eastern

[48] C.f. Thierry 11-12, Thing *Hans Kirk* 23, 37 and Houmann 7.

Jutland. In *Skyggespil* Kirk recalls one particularly formative experience, in which he encounters a deeply ill unemployed day laborer:

> The sick man . . . had awakened something or other in me, as it so often occurs when I am out with father . . . and I hope that father will reassuringly say that the man is not so sick after all and that he will soon recover. But father did not answer before we have come out on the street, and then he says:
> —Yes, he is very sick. It is the sickness one calls hunger. (72)

In 1909, at the age of eleven, Hans is sent off to Sorø Academy in central Sjælland, the hallowed and hidebound gymnasium originally established in the 16th century for the education of young nobleman, a signal event in the life of the young student to which he would in the memoir refer as no less than a *landsforvisning* [exile]. In the early 20th century, long before the meritocratic wave swept across the globe, Sorø functioned largely as a kind of gateway into the upper reaches of Denmark's cultural elite; as Morten Thing observes, it was less a school "for the rich, but nevertheless a schooling in class" (*Hans Kirk* 28). It is at Sorø, improbably enough, that Hans is first exposed to socialist thought, through the figure of Hartvig Frisch, then a substitute teacher at the academy and later, as has been indicated, a Social Democratic politician as well as the principal founder of the Danish edition of *Clarté*. As Thing suggests, Frisch likely had a hand in another oft-discussed event from *Skyggespil*, in which in 1915 young Hans participated in a May Day demonstration wearing his school uniform, much to the horror of bourgeois onlookers (*Hans Kirk* 37). Kirk relates the story of his subsequent meeting with the rector:

> —Are you a socialist?
> —I side with the workers . . .
> —Indeed, he says. But you must wait until you leave school. Here we are not concerned with politics. Students are forbidden from going to demonstrations . . .
> —And it's also forbidden to go to a hotel or restaurant?

> —Yes of course, says the rector a little disoriented.
> —How can it then be that students may participate in Det unge Højre's meetings at the hotel Postgården, while I may not go to a demonstration? (162)

There is by all means a distinct sense of self-mythologizing in these two tales, the story of a young man seemingly at war with the privilege into to which he was born, and yet the particular qualities revealed here, a fierce commitment to the project of class emancipation as well as a large measure of inveterate stubbornness, would come to characterize all of the author's subsequent life and work. Hans Rudolf would indeed attend the May Day demonstration the following year, with nary a protest from the school, and it should come as no surprise, given the nature of the confrontation with the rector, that the young student would choose to study law at Copenhagen, to which he decamps in the fall of 1916.

His induction into the nascent cultural radical circles of Copenhagen came at his own initiative, when in 1918 he and a small group of young students invited Otto Gelsted, who was then beginning to make a name for himself in the journal *Klingen*, to deliver a series of lectures on contemporary philosophy. Kirk's recollection of this meeting some decades later suggests there was from the beginning a considerable distance between them:

> I was surely pretty crusty at that time, dismissively hostile towards anyone who would try to be a mentor to me, for I had a secure feeling that I must find my way myself . . . At that time you studied higher mathematics, which was for me a closed book and Kant and the Marburg school, which in Lenin's (and my) eyes was something terribly petite bourgeois. (Houmann *Hilsen* 14-15).

Gelsted's account of this period, written at the age of 80 in his memoir *Otto Gelsted Fortæaller*, is somewhat confused; in one section of the memoir the poet asserts that he was, through his reading of F.A. Lange, already a communist before he came to know Kirk

(47), but later in the same text describes himself at the time as fundamentally uninterested in such concerns:

> I met Hans Kirk, who had a clearly politically oriented head, which was another world for me. I don't believe that applied to many of my comrades. It was a purely artistic revolution we were trying to push through, without political background . . . But then I met Hans Kirk and came to read Marx and Engels. There were also other things than art, things that are perhaps more important. (73)

Kirk's relative lack of willingness to acknowledge the impact of Gelsted on his thinking should be greeted with a certain degree of skepticism, for as Morten Thing has suggested, Kirk in the 1920s did indeed exhibit a pronounced tendency toward Marburger critical idealism (*Hans Kirk* 64). Nowhere is this more apparent than in his "cultural radical debut," a review article on the French author and Clarté founder Henri Barbusse, which appeared in the initial issue of the Gelsted-edited journal *Sirius* in 1924. Describing the transformation in both the inner life as well as the work of the author wrought by the experience of the trenches, Kirk clearly employs the language of Neo-Kantianism, albeit of a "revolutionary" variety:

> He becomes a revolutionary, the war has revolutionized him. The social truth is simple. There is only the human consciousness's demand for proportionality, for order, and in a confused society only revolution creates order . . . He has succeeded in bringing into agreement reality and his deep desire for truth . . . His consciousness works rationally with reality. He is no longer skeptical, but critically oriented to it. (*Frisindet* 18-19)

It is important to note here that Kirk would not in his seminal collective novels put into practice this conception of literary production; the animating spirit of *Fiskerne* is of course not Kant or Cohen but Freud as well as Adler, that of *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider* Marx. Kirk and Gelsted should be properly understood to have exercised a mutually lucrative

influence upon one another. In the 1920s Gelsted would provide a cultural radical forum for Kirk's even then distinctive concerns, while in the following decade Kirk for his part contributed to Gelsted's evolution toward Marxist communism. This view is, additionally, in accordance with the general course of development of the two figures, for as Morten Thing has noted, Gelsted would not prove to be a particularly charismatic public intellectual and thus in the conduct of the *kulturkamp* would be gradually overtaken by Kirk (*Hans Kirk* 100).

Before turning to the central concern of the chapter, namely Hans Kirk's collective novels of the 1930s, *Dagjerne* and *De ny tider*, we shall first examine the series of articles he published in journals during the 1920s, a period that may very well be considered his "cultural radical phase;" such an exercise is of significant value to the present project, for not only does it serve to distinguish Kirk's general orientation from that of the cultural radical mainstream, but also provides insight into his complex relationship with the rural proletariat, the cause of whose emancipation he claimed as the overriding concern of his life's work. As has been noted, the Danish economy remained predominately agrarian well into the 20th century. In 1901 fully 40 per cent of Danish workers were engaged in agriculture, while only 28 per cent were in the trades and industry, while twenty years later the percentage of agricultural laborers had shrunk to 33, but the figure for industrial employment had only risen a single point (Engelund et. al. 7). In spite of lagging industrial development, social conditions in the country had indeed been changing dramatically since the mid-19th century, particularly in the countryside. Shortly we shall examine, through

Kirk's essays on the subject, the precise nature of this social change; suffice it to note here that the author specifically aligns himself with the class of workers who by all means did *not* benefit from the rising value of Danish agricultural exports and the consequent intensification of agricultural techniques from the mid-19th century onward—the landless rural day laborer and the hard put fisherman of Jutland's west coast. Thus in pronounced contrast to Henningsen in particular and cultural radicalism in general, Hans Kirk's general orientation is decidedly rural; he should also in certain ways be understood to function as the "conscience" of the movement, for in taking up the cause of the very weakest members of society, he went far in pushing cultural radicalism beyond its bourgeois roots. He could have rather easily aligned himself with the emerging industrial worker, who as a force firmly situated on the "right" side of history was most certainly on the rise, but he specifically chooses for himself the cause of the very meekest and most vulnerable; in this sense Kirk clearly understands the distinct conditions of late-industrializing Denmark, for he was very much conscious of his status as, in Carsten Jensen's memorable coinage, a "*kommunist i et bondeland*" (30).

In Henningsen we have seen a distinct leaning toward the individual or "bourgeois" aspect of the cultural radical emancipatory project over against that of its class or "collective" element. In Hans Kirk the relationship is precisely the inverse of that in Henningsen, for in Kirk the concept of individual emancipation is decidedly *subordinate* to that of collective class struggle. Nowhere is this more evident than in his commentary on that most central of cultural radical concerns, namely the sexual emancipation of the human individual. As has been noted, Henningsen in *Hvad med Kultur?* had indicated that

this effort at present had entered into its final stages, the earlier Brandesian radicals having made significant progress already in the previous century, while the *enhedskultur's* façade morality had suffered a decisive blow in the disruptions wrought by the First World War (*Kulturkritik* II; 10). In an important *Kritisk Revy* essay of 1928, Kirk notes that while the generally freer sexual morality characteristic of the urban industrial worker constitutes significant progress, no such development has occurred within the old *landproletariat*; indeed, the growth of the Indre Mission in Denmark's poorest rural regions has resulted in significant *retraction* (*Frisindet* 40). Here again we see Kirk functioning as the "rural conscience" of the movement, in effect drawing attention to the uneven distribution of social change across the entirety of the Danish people. And yet it is equally important to note that Kirk here effectively *collectivizes* what is normally viewed as an individual matter, for his concern with the sexual emancipation of the rural proletariat is ultimately revealed to be only a means to a greater good, namely that of redressing what he considers to be the central factor in the continuing oppression of the rural underclass, that to which he refers as the *sociale ønskedrøm* [social wish-dream]. His 1927 essay on the aforementioned category, which also appeared in *Kritisk Revy*, effectively subordinates Freud's theory of sexual repression to Adler's alternative conception of the *Minderwertigkeitsgefühl*. The feeling of inferiority on the part of the underclass results in the desire for self-assertion, which under present conditions is always denied, resulting in "the wish-dream [as] a surrogate," a kind of fantastic "satisfaction that reality cannot provide"; as examples of this phenomenon Kirk cites the many Klods Hans fabliaux of oral folklore as well as Johannes V. Jensen's somewhat questionable assertion that the tale of Hamlet was in its original form

an expression of "a dream of satisfaction and revenge"(*Frisindet* 32). Kirk concludes the essay with the stern warning that the social wish-dream "is dangerous for the proletariat," for it projects the feeling of inferiority "out into fantasy, and reality is falsified" (34).

Freud would return to the picture, however, in the previously cited essay "Kan Danmark afkristnes" of the following year. In a 1926 *Clarté* essay entitled "Religion og hartkorn," Kirk had first given voice to the particular religious map of Denmark—Grundtvig for the prosperous farmers, the Mission for the landless as well as those consigned to the less fertile soil or the rocky coast of western Jutland—that he would later detail in *Skyggespil*. In the *Clarté* article the author offers a begrudging acknowledgement of the Mission's nature as "a religious proletarian movement," in that it constitutes "an attempt at an ordered worldview, in which the least are the righteous, and it by no means accepts the present conditions" (*Frisindet* 23). And yet like the social wish-dream, it is in its essence detrimental to the rural proletariat:

> But it is dangerous, from a Marxist perspective, because it projects its protest against social disorder out into eternity. In part it is marked by a barren sense of subjection: it directs in its doctrine of the renunciation of all the world's desires its sting against the better off into a demand that they themselves for the sake of blessedness shall take on the poor mans' condition. It is the doctrine of powerlessness, in which powerlessness is elevated to a divine norm. (23)

In the 1928 essay on the possibility of the de-Christianization of Denmark, Kirk reveals his sense that the primary mechanism by which the class outrage of the Mission is channeled into class-harmonizing forms is that of Freudian sexual repression. Here the earlier conception of the social wish-dream becomes a wish-dream of a religious variety:

> Now it must be observed that a severe morality is a necessity under hard life conditions . . . The poorer people are, the more decisive it becomes for them to be on

> the side of the right, to be considered to be good people and not riff-raff . . . Should the rural proletarian uphold a certain economic standard, it demands resignation. He must maintain an iron hard morality; it won't do to give oneself or others free rein, least of all in the erotic area. But abstention from the erotic carries with it a desire to forbid others the enjoyments that are denied oneself. The consequences are a sickly envy and a desire to establish control over the sex lives of others. (*Frisindet* 38)

The repression of individual sexual liberty under present historical circumstances is thus revealed to be confined only to the weakest and most vulnerable, for it is wholly an outgrowth of the dire material conditions under which they are compelled to live. While Kirk does shed light on the damage this puritanical morality inflicts upon its adherents, his real concern lays elsewhere, namely the manner in which "the severe sexual morality constitutes the essential condition for the religion," namely that of the Mission, which falsely directs genuine class anger away from what should be its proper object, that of class oppression (*Frisindet* 40). Hence the author concludes that "if it shall be accomplished that the rural proletariat is liberated from religion, it can only occur through a sexual liberation" (*Frisindet* 40). Here sexual emancipation is understood as the necessary (but insufficient) condition for the ultimate aim of class emancipation, a theme which would as is well known be taken up in greater depth after the Second World War, particularly in the thinking of Marcuse among others.

In many ways Hans Kirk's *Fiskerne* of 1928 amounts to a putting into practice of the theoretical concerns outlined above; as Morten Thing has observed, it should be considered "to a marked degree a cultural radical novel" ("Kulturradikalismen" 119). In spite of the author's misgivings about his debut, critics as well as the reading public have most

certainly judged *Fiskerne* to be the crowning achievement of Kirks oeuvre.[49] Accordingly the novel has already been subject to exhaustive critical analysis, and in addition its central concerns have significantly less bearing on the objectives of the present study; for these reasons the treatment offered here shall be understandably circumscribed. As has been indicated, the novel narrates the story of a community of west coast Indre Mission fishermen as they seek more abundant waters inland along the Limfjord. As the work that introduced the subgenre of the collective novel to Scandinavia, it is of course possessed of no single dominant figure. And yet relative to its far more programmatic Marxist precursors from the Soviet Union, *Fiskerne* is characterized less by its effort to illuminate institutionalized systems of class oppression or the emergence of class consciousness than by the depths of its exploration of *interiority*; perhaps the novel is best understood to be an examination of how the collective experience of exposure to the larger world represented in the more prosperous milieu of the inland fishing village of Gjøl contributes to dramatic change in the *inner* lives of the individual characters. It is in this sense that Hans Kirk deserves to be counted among the cultural radical luminaries, for in spite of his ultimate embrace of historical materialism, he shares their contention that the principle aim of *kulturkritik* is that of developing "a pedagogy that could bring about a change in consciousness among the population," as Harsløv has aptly noted (73). While Henningsen arrives at this self-conception by alternative pathways, namely through Cubism and Functionalism, both figures are ultimately in agreement that theirs' is the domain of

[49] For more on Kirk's reservations about the novel as well as the nevertheless overwhelmingly positive immediate critical reception, see Thierry 34-40.

consciousness, rather than the more concrete work of labor organizing or direct engagement with politics. Once again, the cultural radicals conceive of their own activity as the *cultural* equivalent of what "communism was in politics" (Thing "Kulturradikalismen" 117).

In *Fiskerne* the Freudian echoes are as abundant as they are thinly veiled, for here Kirk presents an image of the pietistic Mission Christianity as a symbolic language infused with repressed sexual desire.[50] A particularly potent example shall here be cited, involving the bachelor Anton Knopper, who is out on the fjord ice-fishing with Thomas Jensen, who himself serves as the community's pastor and chief moral watchdog. Anton is deeply troubled by the recent willingness of his girlfriend Katrine, the sexually liberated daughter from the Gjøl area with a particular penchant for tormenting the pious, when suddenly he tosses down his fishing gear and begins to stagger away:

> Why did you fling down the eel-prong and walk off? Thomas Jensen asked. There must be a reason.
> It's not easy to understand, Anton Knopper answered, and his teeth chattered. But when I wanted to thrust the iron down into the hole, I was gripped by a strange fright. I don't think I dare spear eel anymore.[51]

Anton would eventually overcome his lustful urges for Katrine, ultimately breaking his engagement and settling for the more suitable Andrea, but in other significant instances this would not prove to be the case. A further, and rather comical instance of ongoing sexual repression is to be located in the figure of Tea, the real life basis of which was the

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[50] See Elias Bredsdorff's "Marx, Freud og Adler i Hans Kirks roman Fiskerne" for an exhaustive inventory of the sexual symbolism in the novel.
[51] All English translations cited from *Fiskerne*, *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider*, unless otherwise noted, are from the superb editions of Marc Linder as listed in the bibliography. 135.

aforementioned host mother to Hans Kirk and who in certain ways is the most unsympathetic of the Mission folk. As Bredsdorff has indicated, Tea's hatred of sin manifests itself regularly in the desire to witness the act of sin itself:

> She seeks throughout the book compensation through contempt for the immoral conduct of others, and she is disappointed when she hears others speak about the dire temptations they have been through, if she does not at the same time get to know the details more closely. She is so incensed that there is dancing at the inn that she must go and see *how* naughty it is going. (*Marx* 183)

Both Anton and Tea ultimately overcome their not inconsiderable temptations, but as we shall see, this does not prove to be the case in significant other instances.

Shortly we shall address the matter of the precise nature of Hans Kirk's attitude toward the rural proletariat in some detail, but it must initially be observed here that for all of the intensity and sincerity of the author's loyalty to the underclass, his actual vision for its evolution is most definitely at odds with the contemporary self-understanding of the *landproletarer* themselves; there can be no doubt that Kirk believes the Mission must go. And yet it would be impermissible to characterize his attitude as that of outright *ambivalence*, to suggest that Kirk's feelings for the rural proletariat are somehow tinged with scorn for its religion; indeed, the profound dignity with which he draws the Mission men and women in the novel is unmistakable, a fact which resulted in a widespread misapprehension that the novel was "written by a fellow believer" (Bredsdorff *Marx* 168). Kirk, had, after all, lived and worked with the fishing community for much of 1925, earning the respect and admiration of the believers themselves, who seem to have fully understood

that they themselves were the real world templates for the characters of the novel.[52] And there can be absolutely no doubt that in the mortal contest between the Mission faith of Thomas Jensen and the Grundtvigianism of Pastor Brink, it is the former who proves overwhelmingly the stronger. But it must be conceded that for a reader unsympathetic to Kirk's particular ideology there is something deeply offensive in this, for in form if not content the author's attitude does not substantially differ from that of the Christian Zionist who declares his loyalty to the Jewish people only on the condition that they ultimately cease being Jewish.

The two religious communities exercise some degree of influence on each other throughout the unfolding of the text, and yet as has been suggested it is clear that the exposure to the larger world resulting from the relocation to Gjøl gradually begins to take it toll on the unforgiving code of conduct of the believers. In "Kan Danmark afkristnes" Hans Kirk had, in loyal cultural radical fashion, indicated that the puritanical morality of the Mission had under present conditions used up its formerly legitimate historical utility, in

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[52] An oft-cited letter from the redoubtable matriarch of Kirk's host family written after the appearance of the novel testifies both to the profound affection of the Gjøl Mission folk to the author as well as the complexity of their relationship. While she concedes that she and her husband are fond of Kirk in the same way that they are of their "sons and daughters who are now growing up, but also live without God," the matriarch is particularly incensed at the story of the character Tabita: "Of course I was also irritated by that about Tabita, who is depicted as our daughter, for we as you know do not hope that she shall ever find herself in that situation (to have a child outside of marriage)." It is also apparent in the humorous conclusion of the letter that the Mission folk were indeed aware of the author's political leanings: "Could you not make L. [one of the sons] happy by inviting him for a visit, but you must not make him into a communist!!!" A final notable moment in the letter, which must surely have tugged at the heartstrings as well as at the conscience of the author, is the matriarch's confession that the family cannot afford to buy the book. The letter first appeared in print (with names changed to those of the novel) in Gelsted's review of the novel in *Kritisk Revy*, and is reprinted in full in Bresdorff *Marx* 189-90 and Thierry 38-9.

that the advent of birth control had eliminated the need for it, and that the possibility of the sexual emancipation of the rural proletariat was to be located in "education and prevention techniques" (*Frisindet* 40). And yet earlier in the essay the author had expressed an uncharacteristic pessimism regarding this most essential of cultural radical enterprises, indicating at one point that "the only thing that works is changed life-conditions," namely those to be found in the larger world of the town and the city, among the broadened horizons of the emerging industrial proletariat (37). In this apparent contradiction the inner tension between Kirk the cultural radical and Kirk the historical materialist is made manifest, for the latter assertion would seem to suggest a rather severe limit on the possibilities of changing the consciousness of a people through purely "cultural" measures, through that put into practice so fervently by Henningsen. This tension remains throughout the entirety of Kirk's authorship, but it should be observed here that with respect to *Fiskerne*, it is arguable that it is "changed life-conditions" that prove to be decisive. Nowhere is this more important than in the development of Tabita and Marianne, who taken together could be said to constitute the moral center of the novel; Carsten Jensen has rightly described them as such, noting that in their leaving "the rural behind them as a lost land of childhood . . . an entire nation could see its historical face mirrored" (229). Tabita, daughter of the aforementioned moral scold Tea and her rather hapless but deeply endearing husband Jens, is sent out from the community of believers into domestic service, and almost inevitably finds herself in the family way with a local young man. Returning home to inform her mother Tea, she is subjected to a torrent of contempt, in

which all of the pettiness and vindictiveness at the very heart of Mission morality is revealed:

> No, I never thought I'd have to bear such great shame, Tea said. And it's you, Tabita, who I've admonished and talked to since you were a child! Now I'll never have another happy day; what will people think about us when our children plunge into sin and lewdness. (278)

After enduring a series of further self-obsessed outbursts from her mother, Tabita is asked the name of the man responsible for her "seduction," but the daughter plainly repudiates the worldview of her childhood, insisting "I wasn't seduced . . . It was my own fault. We're going to get married as soon as we can" (279). Gradually Tea is reduced to silence and resignation, due in large part to the influence of Marianne, who as the daughter of a prosperous farmer has never shared the belief system of the community into which she married, and who, in spite of the admonitions of the believers, ultimately comes to serve as surrogate mother to Tabita, easing her transition into a new life beyond the narrow strictures of her upbringing.

It is immediately apparent to the informed reader that in *Fiskerne* the author's Marxist convictions are deeply submerged beneath the text's much more explicit Freudianism, a fact that goes far in explaining how the novel came to be the best selling work in all of Danish literary history. Already it has been noted that many contemporary readers considered the novel to be the work of a fellow believer, but even more surprising is the work's continued popularity among readers of a decidedly anti-Communist persuasion; indeed, Carsten Jensen begins his monograph by noting that no less a figure than Kresten Poulsgård, a founding member of the libertarian-leaning and anti-

immigration Fremskridtsparti [Progress Party], counts Hans Kirk as his favorite author.[53] In Fiskerne the concept of class struggle is muted almost to the point of invisibility, and the novel should in fact be viewed as a Marxist exercise only insofar as the character's religious beliefs, and therefore political ideologies, tend to be determined to a large extent by their social backgrounds. In the "double novel" of the 1930s, *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider*, this ideological orientation is in its essence inverted, for in these works Marx appears front and center, the earlier Freudian concerns themselves retreating far into the sub-textual layers.[54] In this sense a certain progression may be traced within the author's thinking, through the preoccupation in *Fiskerne* with sexual emancipation on toward the overriding concern with class emancipation that characterizes the double novel.

As was the case with *Fiskerne*, much of the theoretical framework of the double novel is prefigured in Kirk's journalistic writings of the 1920s, most prominently in the essays "Religion og Hartkorn" and "Landproletariat," which appeared in *Clarté* respectively

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[53] See Jensen 9-14 for an extended meditation on Poulsgåard and Kirk. In addition, the author of the present study would like to note that while attending FCK matches at the National Stadium in the summer of 2000, he had the opportunity to witness firsthand this phenomenon. He was fortunate enough to have fallen in with a group of young FCK fans, the leader of whom once proudly declared his politics to be "significantly to the Right of Attila." And yet the fan club's name was in fact *Fiskerne*, thanks to their jerseys, each of which bore the name of the particular member's favorite character from the novel. The author, who at that point had yet to read the novel, regrets that he did not remain in contact with these fellows, as they most certainly would have proven to be worthy interview subjects.

[54] The term "double-novel" is attributed to Henrik Damsgaard, who justifies its use by noting that the two novels "encompass a continuous historical development of the same group of characters and their environment" (29). It should be observed here that the critic Ole Ravn has vehemently objected to the term, in that it seems to suggest that the novels constitute the entirety of Hans Kirk's vision, when in fact the author had conceived of a trilogy and even written the third and final volume, the manuscript of which unfortunately was destroyed by Kirk's German captors during the war and never reconstructed (137).

in 1926 and 1927.[55] In these articles the author offers a detailed account of social relations in rural Denmark from the mid-19th century up to the present, which forms the social backdrop of the double novel. The particular typology laid out by Kirk in these essays presents all manner of translation issues, and thus shall be summarized in detail here. At the very top of the social pyramid were the *adelsmænd* [landed aristocracy], as always largely a parasitic class of absentee landlords, whose political clout had for some time been in decline. Far more substantive were the *herremænd* [squires], well-established land-owning families who largely left the management of the farm to underlings. Beneath this layer were the rising *gårdmænd* [farmers, in the European sense of landowner] or, alternatively, *godsejere* [landed proprietors], owners of large properties who practiced an intensified form of agriculture and took much more interest in day-to-day management, but largely hired out the physical labor itself. Beneath this class were the *husmænd* [smallholders], who worked their own small plots as well as, when necessary, did time as hired help on the large landholdings. Together the *gårdmand* and *husmand* make up the *bondestand* [peasantry, sgl. *bonde*, pl. *bønder*], the same class of which Hans Kirk is capable of dishing both immense praise, as in the aforementioned citation from *Skyggespil*, as well as stinging indictment, both for its exploitation of the rural proletariat as well as its intractable "extreme conservatism" (*Frisindet* 20). At the bottom was the *landproletariat* itself, largely made up of the *daglejere* [day laborers] as well as the aforementioned

[55] Kirk's choice of the more explicitly Marxist *Clarté* for these essays, rather than the purist cultural radical organ that was *Kritisk Revy*, is indicative of the fact that at this point the author was already on some level distinguishing himself from the cultural radical mainstream.

fishermen of the west coast. With respect to religious affiliation, the rising *gårdmænd* were once again adherents of Grundtvig, characterized in the 1926 essay as "a faith for land owners, as the old Nordic mythology was created for a warlike upper class" (*Frisindet* 21). In the social world of *Fiskerne* it is the most put upon class, the fishermen, who follow the Mission; in the double-novel, significantly, this is not the case, for the day laborers clearly reject the strictures of the Mission, which instead finds its most fertile recruiting ground in the petite bourgeois *husmænd.*

As described in the essay on the "Landproletariat," rural Denmark had since the mid-19th century transition to limited constitutional government witnessed the virtual extinction of the *adelsmænd* as well as, more importantly, the gradual decline of the *herremænd*. While the primary engine of the decline of the aristocracy had been progressive taxation, the *herremænd* had suffered at the hands of the policy of *udstykning*, the practice of subdividing the large estates into smaller parcels occupied by the more productive *gårdmænd* as well as, more selectively, the *husmænd* (*Frisindet* 25). In some sense this struggle between *herremand* and *bonde* should be understood as the final phase of the transition from semi-feudalism to liberal democracy, a process that had begun with the abolition of *stavnsbånd* [adscription] at the conclusion of the 19th century. For the Marxist Kirk this development as such amounts to significant social progress, and yet at the same time it had amounted to an unqualified catastrophe for the day laborers and the less capable *husmænd*. In our part of the world it has since the outbreak of the Cold War been commonplace to invoke the specter of "creeping communism" in our discourse on Norden; one need only point to Eisenhower's infamous "sin, socialism and suicide" speech of 1960

or, really not all that much more hysterical, sensationalist shock films such as Scattini's *Heaven and Hell*. And yet much of this critique may be rather effortlessly dismissed by the simple fact that the expansion of the welfare society in Norden was viewed by actual Scandinavian communists as an essentially *conservative* phenomenon, as an ongoing effort by the ruling class to preserve as much of its inherited power as was possible under contemporary social conditions. The primary villain in rural Denmark, according to Kirk, was the practice of *udstykning*, a Social Democratic initiative intended to create a solid base for the party among the rural electorate. As Kirk's English language translator, the accomplished labor lawyer and historian Marc Linder, has observed, *udstykning* actually produced the precise opposite effect:

> Contrary to the Social Democrat's goal of forming a socialist vanguard out of the new small farmers, the result of the so-called state smallholders act of 1899 and its renewals in 1904, 1909, and 1914, and especially the Land Acts of 1919 was the creation of a solid defense against the rural proletariat. (XX)

Land reform had in effect driven the most productive of the *husmænd* into the arms of the moderate and even conservative parties; it resulted not in their radicalization but in absolute contrast their petite-bourgeiosification. And as Linder aptly describes, this seems to have been the very intent of the policy, the preservation of the status quo rather than substantive social change:

> Although the ostensible purpose of the 1899 law was to provide land to farm workers, owners of the largest farms supported it as a means of retaining labor that had been migrating to the cities and overseas (especially to the United States) in search of higher wages. The smallholdings were designed to be large enough to induce the better workers to remain on the land, but small enough so that a family could not support itself and would be "forced" to seek employment on others' farms. By the same token, farm workers were willing to accept a lower wage in exchange for their own house and land. (XX)

At the same time that the most able of the *husmænd* were, at least according to their own (false, from Kirk's perspective) self-understanding, on the rise, the less capable among them were subjected to a ruthless process of proletarianization, while the day laborers themselves were driven even further into destitution. Land reform, if continued on its present course, would according to Kirk most certainly result in "a burial club for the Danish proletariat" (31).

The pieces are now in place for a comprehensive understanding of Hans Kirk's complex relationship to the particular social class to whom he dedicated so much of his intellectual activity. In our current age of identity politics it is of course necessary to illuminate the immense gulf between the author's class background and that of the humble people with whom his novels are concerned; Hans Kirk was by all means of bourgeois stock, a highly educated professional intellectual, the child of a physician and of a daughter from an old *gårdmand* family almost "as close to the Danish *herregård* aristocracy as Karen Blixen" (Thierry 9). And yet it is undeniable that this son of privilege, who it must be recalled enjoyed the services of a family housekeeper while studying in Copenhagen, walked with remarkable ease among the day laborers and fishermen who populate his works. Elias Bredsdorff recalls encountering a man from Gjøl decades after the appearance of *Fiskerne*, who had this to say of its author's relationship to his subjects:

> I know all of the characters in that novel and could give the names of every single one of them. Toward the end of the novel it happens that Jens Bungaard's wife Malene again expects a child. That child was me, for Jens Bundgaard and Malene are a portrait of my family. (*Marx* 188)

While Kirk's familiarity with and loyalty to the rural proletariat are unquestionable, it should also be noted here that his commitment to their class emancipation is seemingly at odds with the manner in which he had with respect to his own family background rather seamlessly harmonized class distinctions; recall here that in *Skyggespil* he speaks warmly of the pride and independence of the *bondestand*. And yet as has been indicated the same author in the essay on the "Landproletariat" is no less capable of referring to the *bønder* as "our most dangerous enemy," evidence of a thread of logic that, once again, brushes disturbingly up against that which would later result in the Terror Famine against the Kulaks of Ukraine (*Frisindet* 28). It would be decidedly unfair to associate Hans Kirk with anything resembling the murderous mendacity of Stalin, and yet it is absolutely clear in these essays as well in the double-novel that the *bondestand* must make way for the new society Kirk envisions to begin to emerge.

Thus Kirk's loyalty to rural Denmark should, in the end, properly be confined to only its underclass, although with respect to the *landproletariat* itself, it must further be observed that by no means should the author's attitude be characterized as *nostalgic*, as a kind of romantic longing for a "lost childhood world." Even less so should it be confused with any form of uncritical affection for *actually existing* worker's culture, of which Kirk is capable of stinging criticism. Nowhere is this more evident than in the important essay "Litteratur og tendens," published appropriately in *Kritisk Revy* in 1927, although it should be noted that the author is here concerned less with the rural proletariat than with the urban and industrial. This is Kirk at his very most cultural radical; indeed his observations could even be seen to be a kind of tribute to Henningsen:

> If one by folk-culture means a culture that follows folk-taste and is universally accessible, the thought is pleasant, but the result will be tedious. It is a consequence of constantly suggestive pressure that the masses are under that the upper class in all areas functions as taste determinative . . . The architect knows this: the worker wants to live in a miniature version of the merchant's villa, in the fancy quarter or in a tenement house that at least on the outside resembles that of the upper bourgeoisie. (*Undertrykkere* 116)

Instead, Kirk is seemingly drawn to the working class for what it *might become*, for the possibility that in the future it might one-up the narrow confinements of bourgeois civilization, in effect Franz Mehring's dream of an *Arbeiterkultur*: "Even sensible folks in the Social Democratic party cannot see the untoward: shall the worker not be as good as the others? Yes, the worker should be much better; he should be liberated from the burden that social ambition places upon his back" (*Undertrykkere* 116). Here again we have run up against the issue of breaking out of that aforementioned bourgeois parlor, for it is conceivable at this point to level the charge so often employed against Henningsen, that the author is less concerned with the class emancipation of the workers themselves than with how such an eventuality might ultimately reform bourgeois culture itself.

If Kirk is less than satisfied with the state of contemporary worker's culture, there can be no doubt that with respect to the *material* conditions of the rural proletariat his attitude is one of vehement outrage. The Social Democrats' embrace of the *husmand* over the interests of the *landproletar* is depicted here as the unfortunate outcome of the party's early indebtedness to the German labor movement, which of course was active in a country much farther along in the process of industrialization, although the general tone of bitterness in the essay on the "Landproletariat" is such that there is some suggestion of outright class betrayal. At this early, pre-DKP stage in the author's thinking, he proposes

the abandonment of the *udstykning* policy (as well as, along with it, the *husmænd* themselves) in favor of the nationalization of agriculture, the transition from small scale production to fully industrialized and intensified exploitation of all existing land resources. The party must then turn its efforts toward organization and agitation among the rural proletariat, although here Kirk is uncharacteristically pessimistic, for he presents a long inventory of the seemingly intractable barriers to such activity, beginning with the concession that the social world of the *landsby* (village) is in its essence a closed society in which class distinctions are muted. With respect to the day laborers themselves, they have limited access to the labor press, are blessed with little of the mutual-reinforcing solidarity enjoyed by the industrial workers, are further hampered by the persistence of the social and religious wish-dreams, and worst of all regularly lose the most talented of their lot to the *husmænd*. As for the *bønder* against which the class struggle shall be waged, they are to labor organizing as "the cat is to catnip" and thus prepared to resort to violence in defense of their interests, and even more so remain firmly in control of the educational apparatus (*Frisindet* 29). Unlike his industrial counterpart, the *landproletar* is possessed of no hope in the future, and Kirk must concede that "the wisest he can thus do is go to America" (*Frisindet* 30). In the decade following, as his understanding and commitment to Marxism congealed, Kirk would take this a step further, ultimately concluding in *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider* that the only solution to the immiseration of rural proletariat is its own sublation, in the transition from agrarianism into industrial modernity. It is to these seminal novels that we now turn.

In spite of the immense artistry as well as the critical and popular acclaim of *Fiskerne*, it is Hans Kirk's collective novels of the late 1930s that speak most directly to our contemporary world, and thus it is *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider* that here warrant critical examination at length. Certainly there can be no doubt that the double novel is deeply rooted in the particular social reality of rural Denmark at the dawn of industrialization, that with respect to "authorial intent" the text constitutes an exercise in *ideologikritik*; Henrik Damsgaard is absolutely correct in identifying it as an explicit act of "socialist counter-production." We shall return to Damsgaard's reading later in the chapter, but for present purposes it is sufficient to note that the critic views the double novel as a critique of the "universalizing and ontologizing" nature of bourgeois ideology.[56] It is important to note here, however, that the principal object of Kirk's critique is less the bourgeoisie itself (as in earler, Brandesian radical critique) than the official theory and praxis of Thorvald Stauning's Social Democratic party after it entered into its long period of rule in 1929. For Kirk and his comrades in the DKP, the behavior of the Social Democrats in the 1930s is characterized almost entirely by accommodation and even outright appropriation of bourgeois ideology, a strategy which Damsgaard has deemed as that of acting as the *sygehjælper* [nurse's aide] to capital (8). This tendency toward compromise manifested itself in the Marburg influenced "revisionist" ideology that Danish Social Democrats shared

[56] Already in his important essay "Litteratur og tendens" of 1927, Kirk had laid the foundation for a comprehensive kind of Gramscian critique. Here Kirk seeks to remedy the older literary radical prejudice in favor of *skønlitteratur* [belles lettres] and against mere *tendenslitteratur* [tendentious/propoganda literature], asserting that "there has not from the beginning of the world been written a book that does not in one way or another have a *tendens*," and that to argue for "authorial neutrality" is de facto to offer tacit consent to the particular values of bourgeois civilization (*Undertyrkkere* 111).

with other West European labor parties, according to which the cause of socialism is best served by conditions of economic growth rather than crisis (23), and in the concept of "social partnerism," in which the class divisions of landowner, capitalist and worker are understood to be "natural" and "necessary" as well as mutually beneficial (13).

For the contemporary reader, much of the political context of the double novel, in which social democrat and communist debate the nature of the coming new society, must surely come off as more than a little quaint and of scant interest to our "post-historical" age, to invoke Fukuyama's now largely discredited conception. For those of us in the Anglophone sphere, in which as is well known the labor movement was never able to solidify its power to such an extant as actually to warrant any real measure of "counter-production" from its far Left wing, such concerns risk sliding into the domain of the wholly irrelevant. If such debates ever carried much currency in our part of the world, there can be no doubt that at present they are effectively closed, a victim of the twin engines of the Neoliberal ascendancy and of economic globalization, the defining phenomena of our age. But this is by no means to suggest, once again, that *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider* do not continue to speak to us; indeed, it is arguable that now more than ever they are worthy of our (re)discovery. In order to root out the contemporary resonance of the double novel, we must however perform a kind of Freudian exercise (in the very loosest sense!), for we must in some ways separate out the manifest content (that is, the specific debate between revisionist and revolutionary socialisms) from what could be called the latent content, the seemingly timeless and yet extraordinarily pertinent subtextual layers which, as has been asserted, have much to teach us.

How may a work written in an obscure language by an even obscurer author be of relevance to us today? Everything here hinges on the *collective character* of the subgenre of the collective novel, which after its local inauguration by Hans Kirk in 1928 briefly rose to a preeminence in the Nordic countries unmatched by any other part of the world, with the exception of the Soviet Union, although the form's vogue in revolutionary Russia was arguably a far less organic development, given that it was virtually assured by the official literary policy of the Stalinist state. Indeed the subgenre would seem to be particularly suited to Norden, as is evidenced by the observation of Janet Mawbry, one of the few scholars to address the form in English, that the concept of the collective novel "is not commonly a part of literary terminology outside of Scandinavia" (143). In many ways this is entirely understandable, for it is arguable that it is in the Nordic countries that the practice of *collective action* has scored its largest and most lasting victories; the much remarked "collectivist" character of Scandinavian society is in fact readily attested not only by the extraordinary rates of union density but as well in the persistent tolerance of the "confiscatory" marginal tax rates so roundly (and obsessively!) condemned by the Neoliberal braintrust.[57] Much of the relative success of Nordic collectivism must certainly

[57] According to the most recent OECD figures, union density for Denmark stands at 68.8%, Finland 70.0, Norway 54.4, and Sweden 68.4, as opposed to the OECD average of 18.1 (http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=UN_DEN). Such an extraordinary gap between Norden and the rest of the OECD member nations may in part be explained by the degree to which the principal of collective action has penetrated the various sectors of the economy; membership in a union in Scandinavia, plainly, is not generally restricted to the traditionally "blue collar" occupations as in other lands. Comparative tax figures are of course a much more complex beast. For what it is worth, the OECD lists the all-in top rates for Denmark at 56.1%, Finland 55.5, Norway 47.8, and Sweden 56.5. These are notably

be attributed to the broad consensus that begin to take form in the 1920s, according to which it was taken as a matter of course that practice of collective action could and must be employed in the enterprise of reshaping social relations, whether such efforts be of a "reformist" or a "revolutionary" variety. Whether or not such struggles were ultimately channeled into class harmonizing forms or not, the Scandinavian Left could rest assured that the concept of social class *means something*, that at the very least there is much to be gained from the mobilization of *collectivities*.

In our part of the world this kind of consensus was, is as well known, vehemently *resisted* from its very inception, as early Neoliberal pioneers attempted to portray the demands of the collective (Berlin's positive liberty) as wholly at odds with those of the individual (negative liberty); one calls to mind here Michael Kazin's notion of the "yawning gulf" between "the desire for individual liberty" and the "yearning for social equality" confronted by the American radical movement since at least the 19th century (xviii). David Harvey, by many accounts the preeminent critic of Neoliberalism, has described how from the movement's very origins atop Mont Pelerin it has been motivated by a profound and deep-seated *fear of the collectivity*, born of a dread for how "the alliance with the Soviet Union and the command economy constructed within the US during the Second World War might play out politically in a post-war setting" (22). Collectivism may have been necessary to rescue the single individual from the Nazis, but in the post-war world any hint of even *thinking collectively* has come to constitute the individual's most dire peril; this

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lower than those of Belgium (59.4%) or Hungary (57.6), but of course significantly higher than the U.S. figure of 43.2 (www.oecd.org/ctp/taxdatabase*).*

could be said to be the very essence of the historical mindset of the Neoliberals. Perhaps no thinker has distilled this more succinctly than Bourdieu, whose 1998 essay characterizes the movement as no less than a *machine infernale*, as "a programme of the methodological destruction of collectives" ("Essence"). And it has now been four decades since Neoliberalism began to acquire the air of respectability, and more than three since one of its patron saints declared the non-existence of society itself. That Friedrich von Hayek and his progeny have triumphed in the "war of ideas" they declared back in 1947 is everywhere apparent to us today; indeed it is debatable that, in spite of the proliferation of academic papers on "resisting Neoliberalism," any of us in the human sciences really believe anymore in the possibility of class, or in the present context more properly, *collective* emancipation. To a certain extant this general disillusion is understandable, especially when we adopt the planetary perspective as we are called to do in this age of globalism, for we in the North have not only inflicted the infernal machine upon ourselves. In perhaps an even greater offense we have, by way of the faux theoretical cover of the "Washington Consensus," imposed the model upon our less prosperous neighbors to the South.[58] As Neoliberal praxis has, teamed with that of economic globalization, spread itself inexorably across the globe, we humanists should not be excessively taken to task for our "increasing inability to imagine a different future" from that of the typical Davos attendee, as Frederick Jameson has mournfully noted (*Archeologies* 232).

[58] See Harvey 93-8 for a superb account of the Washington Consensus and the immiserating impact it has had on the South, particularly in Latin America.

And yet we in the human sciences must not be in haste to entirely excuse ourselves from complicity in the triumph of the Neoliberal project. We shall return to this matter in greater detail in the conclusion of the present study; at this point such discussion shall be limited to the development of the contemporary novel as well as its adjoining discipline of literary studies, but with a decidedly planetary perspective, as we are called to do in our current era of globalization. When surveying the global literary field at present, it is difficult not to conclude that much of the dynamism in the contemporary novel has resulted from those narratives which directly engage the interplay of Global South and North, whether they be in the form of the post-colonial novel, the immigrant narrative or the post-national epic. It is eminently arguable that it is these works, in which South speaks to North, that have posed the most productive challenges to established forms, at the very least since the flowering of the *nouveau roman* in post-war Europe. And yet it nonetheless remains a notable curiosity that this new kind of literature, which has otherwise gone so far in reshaping the novel as well as even our understanding of the world, has by and large upheld the long-dominate convention of the *singular narrative subject*, be it in its traditional autonomous or more recent de-centered iteration. In some respects this is indeed understandable, for the novel of course ranks highly among the most lonely and isolating of the narrative arts. And when we reflect on the literatures of the Global South, we find additional impetus for this *individualization of narrative* in Jameson's rather infamous 1986 essay on "Third World Literature," in which the critic rather bluntly asserts that all such texts may *only* be read as "national allegories," which is in effect to claim that the social and political reality of the South is so oppressive that the domain of individual

interiority is a luxury that may not be afforded (69). And if, as numerous theorists have asserted, the very linchpin of historical modernity is to be located in the emergence of self-reflexivity, then it is only natural that the contemporary novel of the South concern itself with the dramatization of individual interiority.[59] This in itself constitutes a kind of "counter-production," an assertion by the South that we in the North hold no monopoly on the elusive concept of "modernity," be it in its historical, its aesthetic, or even its economic iteration. Few more noble callings may be imagined than that of attempting to impart a measure of the infinitude of the inner life among the manifold of single individuals who constitute the Global South, those who are all too often perceived by the North as a vast and undifferentiated mass.

And yet it is precisely here that Hans Kirk reveals his value to us today, for he demands that we recall an earlier moment in literary history, when the very idea of the singular narrative subject was vigorously and aggressively called into question, namely the aforementioned interwar period in which the subgenre of the collective novel briefly rose to preeminence, first in the Soviet Union and then outward through Europe and even into North America, although as has been asserted it is arguably in Scandinavia that the form reaches its aesthetic apex. Shortly we shall attempt to define the particular nature of the collective novel in some detail, but here it is sufficient to note that the form is in its essence distinguished, at least in those works which belong to the larger umbrella category of

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[59] The most prominent exponent of the equation of historical modernity with self-reflexivity is of course Jürgen Habermas. See in particular the first of his lectures on *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1992). For an account more specifically attuned to literary studies, see the first chapter of Matei Calinescu's *Five Faces of Modernity* (1987).

proletarian literature, by the presupposition that the convention of the singular narrative subject is irredeemably infected with bourgeois ideology and thus not only insufficient for the representation of changing social reality, but, more significantly, in its essence profoundly *reactionary*.[60] As such it is characterized by what is here termed the principal of *narrative diffusion*, according to which the narration is parceled out across a wide array of individual characters in more or less equal installments, in the broader effort to undermine the primacy of the single individual that is so central to the bourgeois conception of the social world. In the heady 1930s, perhaps the moment at which thinking collectively reached its pinnacle in European intellectual history (with disastrous consequences in certain parts of the world, to be sure), it was indeed reasonable for someone like the German critic Otto Biha, an early theorist and advocate of the subgenre, to assert that "the bourgeois novel is declining" (91), or for the American Granville Hicks to ponder whether "the collective novel will be the novel of the future" (28). It must be conceded here that while there was undeniably a Europe-wide collective novel *vogue* during the 1930s, the subgenre by no means came to displace the traditional bourgeois novel of the individual even in the Nordic countries.[61] In contrast, the collective novel

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[60] Barbara Foley, the principal English language scholar of proletarian literature, has identified four distinct subgenres within the category; these include the less experimental "proletarian fictional autobiography," "proletarian *bildungsroman*," and "proletarian social novel," as well as, finally, the collective novel. For a lengthy discussion, albeit largely limited to American literary production, of these modes see chapters 8 through 11 of her *Radical Represenations*.

[61] Finn Klysner, the principal scholar of the collective novel in Denmark, has identified no more than 24 examples of the subgenre during the period 1928-1944, a figure which hardly suggests predominant status. Klysner thus concludes that the 1930s "cannot alone be characterized as *midt i en kollektivtid*, but also as *midt i en jazztid*, citing the wildly

should be understood to have been in a kind of *competition* with more traditional forms during this period, a contest in which, when we survey the contemporary literary field, it cannot be denied ultimately concluded in unqualified defeat. For all of Jameson's much maligned bungling of the hermeneutics of the "Third World Literature," it is often overlooked that his analysis of the development of the novel in the North is largely spot on as well as highly instructive. "We have been trained," says the critic, "in a deep cultural conviction that the lived experience of our private experiences is somehow incommensurable with the abstractions of economic science and political dynamics" (69). While Jameson is not here directly addressing the historical presence of the collective novel, it is nonetheless readily apparent from this that it has no place in our contemporary literary world, that if ever there was much of a real contest between the collectivist and the individualist conceptions of the novel, it is the singular narrative subject which has won out in the end. Barbusse, Kirk, Dos Passos, these figures may retain a certain historical interest for us, but for the red literary meat we must return to the old standbys, to Joyce and Proust and Kafka and all those who followed in their wake.

It is difficult not to conclude from this that since the 1930s we humanists have, in spite of our best efforts to the contrary, at the very least floated along with the high tide of

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popular 1931 *individroman* of Knud Sønderby (8). And yet the contemporary siginficance of the subgenre should by no means be underestimated, as is evidence by the presence of a number of authors on Klysner's list of a number of authors who are better remembered for their later *non-collective works*, principal among these Martin A. Hansen. Further evidence that the decade was at the very least understood by contemporaries to have been dominated by the collective form is to be located in Karen Blixen, who in a 1934 interview cited its proliferation as the principal reason for her flight from native language (Brundbjerg 14).

Neoliberalism, for we have, in reverting to the convention of the singular narrative subject, effectively abandoned the very idea of the collectivity. From the figure of Hans Kirk as collective novelist we indeed have much to learn, although it is of course important to note the immense and irremediable gulf between the social world of interwar Denmark and that of our own. In the 1930s it was incumbent upon the cultural radicals to advocate for both the emancipation of the individual (over against the specter of fascism to the south) *as well as* that of the collective (over against the ever-ready to compromise Social Democrats of the Stauning era). Our situation at present is of course fundamentally different, for it is the destructive and fundamentally asocial "individualism" of the Neoliberals rather than the irrevocably broken remnants of fascism or Stalinism that demand our attention today. We must make every effort to re-infuse our disciplines with the spirit of the collectivity; otherwise we risk consigning ourselves to Bourdieu's nightmare scenario of the infernal machine, to a world defined by the Hobbesian "struggle of all against all and cynicism as the norm of all action and behavior" ("Essence").

Before proceeding to *Daglejerne* and the *De ny tider* themselves, a few comments are in order regarding the (sub)generic nature of the collective novel in general, as well its employment by Hans Kirk in particular, as there remains considerable confusion regarding the term, prompting a number of Danish critics to question its very utility.[62] The principal English language scholar of the collective novel is, once again, Barbara Foley, but her

[62] C.f. Thierry 37 as well as Ravn's "Autonomiets begrænsinger" for skeptical assessments of the concept of the collective novel, both in general as well as with respect to Hans Kirk.

analysis of the form is of less use to the present study, given her exclusive concern with American literary production. This is most evident in her assertion that the subgenre belongs more or less to the larger category of proletarian fiction, and thus that the "term 'proletarian collective novel' would therefore be tautological" (398). There is no small measure of curiosity in this supposition, given that the single most aesthetically accomplished example of the form from an American author (and indeed the only collective novel in English that is still regularly read and studied), John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*, is decidedly non-proletarian in its ideology and worldview, its hero being of course not "the people" but the city of New York itself. In the Denmark of the 1930s the collective novel was even less exclusively bound up with the concerns of the working class, for as Ole Hyltoftf Petersen has correctly observed, Jens Gielstrup, Mogens Klitgaard and Leck Fischer stand out immediately as examples of collective novelists of the period whose primary milieu was the petite- or even upper bourgeoisie (9).

Given these limitations, Foley does nevertheless offer a series of general observations of some use to the present study, asserting that the collective novel is generally characterized by one of three features, each of which, conveniently enough, most certainly applies to *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider*. In the first place Foley describes the subgenre as one that treats "the group as a phenomenon greater than—and different from—the sum of the individuals who constitute it" (400). In Hans Kirk's double novel we shall shortly see this principal at work in exemplary fashion, for the author presents the concept of individual emancipation, understood here in its eminently American sense of "escape from one one's proletarian roots," as a kind of *temptation* away from the nobler

(and collective) aim of class emancipation; in effect the author dramatizes the rarely discussed tension between individual aspiration and class solidarity. In the second place Foley asserts that the collective novel is among proletarian subgenres the one that is most comfortable with literary High Modernism, understood here in its avant-garde and experimentalist aspects, in that the form frequently employs "experimental devices to break up the narrative and rupture the illusion of seamless transparency."[63] To be sure Hans Kirk remained throughout his writing career, as Werner Thierry has observed, largely oblivious to the various European movements associated with Modernism—Expressionism, Dada, Surrealism (23). But this is by no means to claim his collective novels are not every bit as experimental, only that their experimentalism is to be located elsewhere, particularly in the aforementioned principal of *narrative diffusion*. The experience of reading the collective novel, especially for those of us schooled in the triumphalist individual aesthetics described by Jameson, is if anything profoundly *disruptive*. Lastly, Foley observes that that collective novel is frequently characterized by the assertion of "direct documentary links with world of the reader," especially in the "detailed evocations of work processes" (402). That this is the case with the double novel rather goes without saying, for the central story of the narrative is, after all, the story of the

[63] It is also worth noting here that Foley in connection with this second characteristic further observes that collective novel often leaves the impression of having been "cinematically conceived" (401). This is a particularly astute observation, given the fact that if the subgenre could be said to be alive to day, it would most certainly be located in the long form television dramas of David Simon. Whether or not the hero of *The Wire* is indeed Jimmy McNulty or the city of Baltimore remains subject to debate, but with respect to the more recent *Treme*, there can be no doubt that it is the city of New Orleans itself that occupies the center of the narrative. Simon's work could be said to function as the very most forward element of the aforementioned need for "collectivist counter-production."

coming of a cement factory to the fictional village of Alslev. As Marc Linder recalls, Gelsted upon visiting Hans Kirk in 1937, confused by the presence of so many scientific titles upon the author's writing desk, was moved to ask him if he had begun the study of engineering (xxiii).

Commentary of greater utility is to be located in Finn Klysner's 1976 study *Den danske kollektiveroman: 1928-1944*, which remains perhaps the most comprehensive and illuminating treatment of the subgenre's presence in Danish literary history. Klysner begins by drawing an important distinction in the practice of literary classification, namely that between its *ahistorical* and *historical* aspects. Ahistorical classification, alternatively *typology*, is of course by definition independent of time, for it seeks to identify the abstract model to which the text attempts to correspond, here that of the group as an entity larger than the single individual. The ahistorical aspect permits Klysner to include earlier works such as Herman Bang's *Stuk* as, in essence, precursors of the collective novel proper. While ahistorical classification is internally determined, historical or *generic* classification is determined by the "literary norm system" and the "socio-cultural situation" of a particular age; the former is thus concerned with *structural* factors, the latter with the external, with literary *fashion* (13). For Klysner typological classification is primarily within the domain of *content*, while the generic is more a matter of *thematics*; each factor is furthermore *necessary but insufficient* for identifying a work as a collective novel proper, which structurally speaking must not only elevate the group above the individual, but just as much be informed by the thematic spirit of a particular age, here circumscribed as the period from Hans Kirk's *Fiskerne* in 1928 up through Hans Scherfig's *Idealister*, completed

in 1944 but not published until after the end of the German occupation. According to Klysner as well as, more or less, general consensus, this period is defined more than anything by the "idea of collectivism" (20). For Klysner, very much a product of the Marxist vogue that overtook the Danish academy in the 1970s, the collective novel proper may only really be produced under favorable social conditions, namely those that, unlike our present age, are characterized by *thinking collectively*. While there is much that is questionable in this assertion, it does serve to remind us of the inherent difficulty in the effort to encourage and to facilitate "collectivist counter-production" in our relentlessly individualistic age.

Klysner's lengthy commentary on the nature of the concept of the group in the collective novel is equally of value to the present study. For present purposes, the most significant distinction he draws is that between the sociological categories of the *formal* and the *informal* group. Unlike the informal group, the formal group is constituted for the purposes of reaching a conscious aim; its division of labor is thus organized around a common goal, it is governed by specific centers of power, and, finally, it is characterized by the interchangeability of its component members (17). In the double novel is dramatized the process of transformation from the informal group—that of the unorganized day laborers before the arrival of the plant—, to that of the formal, which is manifested in the newly formed trade union under the (local) leadership of the former navvy Cilius. The formal group is further divided into those in which the membership is characterized by an essentially *positive* view of the above listed three factors, and those in which it is *negative*. Hence Klysner is therefore further able to subdivide the subgenre into on the one hand the "collective collective novel," in which the members of the group willingly accept the

division of labor and of power as well as their replaceability as conditions necessary for the pursuit of the common goal, and the "anti-collective collective novel," in which the division of labor is viewed as ultimately serving the profit-making interests of the single individual (owner) or small group (shareholders), the centers of power are imposed upon the members of group with or without consent (one thinks here of all those corrupt union "bosses" so often referenced by the Right), and the interchangeability of the individual member is seen as a constant threat to one's livelihood (18). Foley's assertion of the tautological nature of the concept of the "proletarian collective novel" is thus revealed to be wholly incorrect, for it is all too easy to imagine the form in the service of an *anti-labor* agenda; indeed, one may wonder as to why the Heritage Foundation or some other Neoliberal think tank has not yet funded such an enterprise, in which the collective form is employed for the purposes of undermining the very idea of the collectivity.[64]

Klysner's critical survey of the interwar collective novel corpus provides the means for two further observations regarding the nature of the form as it is manifested in the work of Hans Kirk. In the first place it is notable that according to the critic's reckoning the anti-collective collective novels significantly outnumber the collective collective novels during this period. Janet Mawbry would most certainly confer with this assessment, for in her survey she notes that by and large "the collective novels of the decade do reveal a pessimism, even a hopelessness . . . which is a little disquieting when one considers that many of the authors . . . represent part of what one might have expected to be the

[64] The work of noted insufferable miscreant James O'Keefe, in particular his "Teachers' Unions Gone Wild" video series, may be cited here as an indication that the Right is learning.

intellectual front against Nazism" (159). Hyltoft is most certainly in agreement here, observing that "it is a dark and threatening picture that the collective novel draws of the thirties. It is more surrender than confidence, more a feeling of stagnation than progress" (19). Both Mawbry and Hyltoft, significantly, cite the figure of Hans Kirk as the single most prominent exception to this general rule, and with good reason, for the author by no means could be said to belong to the "immiseration" school of proletarian literature; the story he tells in the double novel, at least in the truncated form in which we have received it, is in every sense a story of *progress*, of the journey of the day laborers out of semi-feudal exploitation into the warmer future of industrial modernity; this relentless optimism on the part of Kirk has led Carsten Jensen to baptize him, in a meta-referential riff on Danish literary history, as the very "poet of the industrial breakthrough" (78). It is of course difficult to locate the precise source of this stubborn optimism that lies at the very the heart of *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider*, and yet it may not be too much of a stretch to attribute at least a measure of it to the author's longtime association with the happy warriors of cultural radicalism; Rifbjerg reminds us, once again, that it is impossible "to be a cultural radical and a cultural pessimist at the same time" (10).

It should be observed here that the "faith in light" that animates the double novel was by no means easily acquired, for as is well documented Hans Kirk was eventually compelled to abandon an earlier version of this project which had been conceived as a kind of putting into practice of the ideas presented in the essay on the "Landproletar"; e.g. the novel was to have exclusively concerned itself with the situation of the agricultural day laborer within the context of the old-order, pre-industrial society. As Thierry recounts, the

author in 1933 ultimately abandoned this novel for want of any kind of recognizable hopefulness regarding the future; instead, Hans Kirk would place his faith in the coming of industry, in the ability of the factory to provide the necessary conditions for the emancipation of the rural proletariat (51). We are further aware that the author struggled not only with maintaining a general spirit of optimism within the text, but also with the admittedly rather mundane and quotidian nature of its *content*. *Daglejerne* is principally the story of the impact of a severe drought upon the lower rungs of a middle Jutland agricultural village early in the 20th century, sufferings that are largely alleviated by the coming of the cement factory, while *De ny tider* is largely the tale of the of the formation of a labor union and the grueling strike it wages in the years immediately before the outbreak of the First World War, followed by the boom years of the war itself and concluding shortly after the armistice. From this brief summary alone it is immediately apparent that the precise content of the double novel's plot most certainly flies in the face of what we generally associate with the modern novel; one thinks here of Jameson's previously mentioned reflections as well as those of Matei Calinescu, who correctly describes how aesthetic modernity, from its very inception in Baudelaire, consciously sets itself up in absolute opposition to bourgeois or, more specifically, economic modernity (4). In the novel as we understand it today, economics has little if no place. As for the novel before Modernism, Franco Moretti's quantitative studies have resulted in his rather curious (to us, but nonetheless true) assertion that the European novel from its very origins has been overwhelming concerned with *adventures*, an observation which still of course holds water

today, if we are willing to step outside of the rarefied domain of *belles lettres*.[65] That Hans Kirk himself was painfully aware of the less than heroic nature of the content of his double novel we are assured from his own reflections during the writing process, as is evidenced by the recollection of his good friend Ebbe Neergaard some ten years later:

> He revealed that he longed to write a "romantic" book, three long novellas that together would form a kind of revolutionary trilogy: one on Spartacus, one on galley slaves, and one on the French Revolution. Romanticism! Like hell Hans Kirk is a romantic. But he was ready to believe that there was something of a drudgery regarding the realistic novels about the Danish worker's development; he wanted to give vent to a more full-blooded content that gave his imaginative abilities free reign. (Thing *Hans Kirk* 173-5).

Hans Kirk's double novel is very much a product of immense labor, indeed nearly a decade's worth, but it is not correct to designate it as a *labor of love*. The author would eventually come to write the novel on galley slavery, *Slaven* [*The Slave*], produced while in captivity during the Second World War and summarily destroyed by the Germans; it is important to note here that the author chose to reproduce *this* work, which was published in 1948, rather than the third and final volume of the proposed trilogy, which also fell victim to the Germans. If we in literary studies are indeed to take it upon ourselves, as the present study most certainly asserts, to seek the revival of the collective novel in contemporary literature, then we must once again be acutely aware of the inbuilt obstacles to such efforts.

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[65] See Moretti "Novel and Theory" 114-17 for a superb discussion of the historical distinction between the adventure and the quotidian novel. It is interesting to note here the recent phenomenon of the encroachment of popular form into the sphere of the "serious" novel; one thinks of the "mashup novels" of Quirk Books, among them *Android Karenina* (2010) as well as the remarkably (disturbingly?) popular *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* of the previous year.

The pieces are now in place for a detailed examination of *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider*, with special consideration for those elements of the double novel that are of most relevance to our contemporary era. But first it is necessary to address its "manifest content," that is to situate properly the text within the social world of the age and to illuminate the precise nature of the author's particular ideological program. Regarding the latter, Hans Kirk's agenda is, as has been indicated, fundamentally altered in the double novel from that in *Fiskerne*, which was in its essence a story of the de-Christianization of the rural proletariat. In *Daglejerne*, to be sure, the Mission is indeed eminently present, although its base is to be located not among the *landproletarer* as in the earlier novel, but in sharp contrast in the *husmænd*, for the rather simple reason that they actually have something (material) to lose. Here the rural proletariat (which, given the change in setting, is manifested in the agricultural day laborer rather than the fisherman) is portrayed as fundamentally beyond the reach the Mission's evangelism; indeed, Hans Kirk is at pains to illuminate a kind of nascent and largely unarticulated class consciousness as the ideological core of the day laborer's mentality. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the figure of Tora, wife of the recently proletarianized (by the drought) *husmand* Marinus Jensen, who is immediately dismissive of Missionary Karlsen's efforts to pin the blame of the loss of their farm on the family's own spiritual shortcomings:

> 'Oh, stuff and nonsense,' Tora said. "Do you think our Lord is playing with us, like a boy who pokes a dung beetle with a stick. No, what happened was what was supposed to happen, that's all we know. We can't change it no matter how much we'd like to. No, I've got no confidence in the Pious . . . they chatter away about something they don't know anything about . . .' (15)

Tora is here echoing what Henrik Damsgaard (albeit highly critically, from an orthodox Marxist perspective) has characterized as a pre-Christian *almuefatalisme* [peasant fatalism], which according to Hans Kirk, recalling Ernst Bloch, amounts to an incipient form of class consciousness, in that it constitutes a conscious rejection of (petite-) bourgeois ideology (43). Later in the novel, after the coming of the factory, and most certainly throughout *De ny tider*, the Mission is by all measures in retreat from the social world. Here is Engineer Høpner, the very incarnation of industrial modernity, in response to a request for funds for the building of a Mission house:

> 'There's a difference between an impoverished rural proletariat and a modern industrial proletariat. Religion doesn't do it anymore for the factory worker—he's grown away from its primitive symbolic language. He's achieved so much in material welfare that all that nonsense about suffering and renunciation appears foolish to him.' (224)

In effect, Hans Kirk answers himself the question posed in "Kan Danmark afkristnes?," for here it is decidedly the impact of material history, rather than the "cultural radical remedy" of education that ultimately produces significant social change. The pietistic religion of the *husmænd* and their fellow petite-bourgeois ultimately fades from the narrative, as is evidenced by Missionary Karlsen, whose eventual suicide (prompted by a rather predictable giving in to the temptations of the flesh) constitutes a rare moment of socialist realist didacticism within the text. The day laborers themselves, in contrast, bypass the Mission altogether, their *almuefatalism* rather seamlessly (and problematically, Damsgaard would assert) transforming itself into the articulated class-consciousness of the industrial labor movement.

On the abstract level, the double novel therefore describes, from the collective perspective of the bottom, the transformation of a rural and semi-feudal society into that of modern industrial capitalism; the text should thus be understood above all as "a fragment of the story of the industrial worker's emergence in Denmark," as Damsgaard has aptly designated it (7). One crucial observation immediately comes to mind here: in the double novel it is industrial modernity that comes to the village, rather than, as is almost always the case in Marxist-informed proletarian literature, the emptying out of the village for the urban industrial center. For Damsgaard this rural setting amounts to the fatal flaw of the text:

> When the author's intention with the novel is to describe critically a group of wage laborers efforts to organize themselves collectively in economic and political struggle against capital, and he at the same time chooses to describe this struggle in its isolated concrete manifestations in the little rural parish, a whole series of problematic limits in the text's critical range emerge: the penetration of industrial capitalism into the parish comes to be presented as the penetration of a force of nature. (35)

Because capital makes no appearance in the text—indeed, the workers only experience with the higher ups is to be found in Engineer Høpner, who functions only as an *agent* of capital rather than capital itself, and if not presented entirely positively is by all means depicted as a categorical improvement over their former employers among the *gårdmand* class—the workers do not experience directly the full measure of their exploitation, for the very purpose of the factory, that of *capital accumulation*, is equally absent here; this is precisely what Marx means when he speaks of the "mystification" of production.[66] Because

[66] C.f. Marx's famous discussion of the fetishism of commodities in Volume 1 of *Das Kapital*: "A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of

of this phenomenon, the incipient labor movement in the little village does not question the fundament of capitalist production, namely the inherently exploitative relation between labor and capital; the union's activities are therefore largely confined to the *circulation* sphere (principally in the effort at obtaining higher wages and better working conditions), rather than properly Marxist struggle, which of course directs its efforts at the sphere of *production*. As such the cement worker's union is particularly susceptible to the influence of the "revisionist" wing of the early 20th century labor movement, which in the Denmark of the 1930s seeks to channel class struggle into ultimately capital affirmative and class harmonizing pathways. In the text the Social Democrat's revisionist strategy is manifested in the figure of Børgesen, the "professional" labor organizer from the capital who arrives late in *De ny tider* with the apparent intention of neutering the revolutionary potential of the union, represented by the local leader Cilius:

> Now Cilius was having a discussion with Børgesen, the big, calm machinist. "If it was up to me, we'd strike once every year," Cilius said. "It's fine with that tug-of-war stuff, but I'd rather have a fight." But haven't we gotten far with that tactic?" Børgesen asked. Cilius turned soberly thoughtful. "Of course, indeed we have, Børgesen, I can't complain, he said. "If things keep up the way they've been going, we'll wind up with the power. When I was a navvy, we beat up a contractor who

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men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor" (320). The mystification of capitalism rests in its false transfermation of the genuine social nature of labor into that of "the fantastic form of a relation between things" (321). For Marx the fetishism of commodities is a powerful force even within the urban industrial capitalism that was his central concern; in the rural world of Hans Kirk's double-novel, this mystification could be said to be doubly effective. Indeed, the attitude of the workers to the factory at times in the text approaches the kind of semi-religious veneration of the cargo cults of old: "To be sure, the agricultural workers had seen machines before, both steam engines and threshing machines, but they hadn't imagined that anything that huge existed. They stood, absorbed, and stared at the shiny steel monster as it was being put ashore on the wharf. How in the world would the machine be put in place in the engine house? But they did it." (235).

> was going to lower our wages. And when he turned up with strikebreakers, we threw him in the water." "That was those methods, " Børgesen said. "Now we make progress by the peaceful process of negotiation." "I trust you, Børgesen," Cilius said. "You're my friend any time." (500)

At this point in the text, it is likely that Damsgaard would in fact declare the double-novel to be an example of Klysner's category of the *anti-collective* collective novel, in that an interest from the top of the hierarchy of the formal group (namely that of the Social Democratic politicians of the capital) fundamentally betrays the interest of the workers by compromising with capital; it must be conceded here that this reading is largely on par with the *folkefront* strategy adopted by the DKP after 1935, according to which the communists pledged active cooperation with the ruling Social Democrats in the broad effort at resisting fascism, thereby limiting their intramural attacks to allegations of "the treason theme against certain right-leaning Social Democrats, especially Stauning" (Damsgaard 81).

Damsgaard ultimately concludes that Hans Kirk's understanding of Marx is insufficient for genuinely Marxist class struggle, his argument resting on the assertion that the author has fundamentally muddled Marx's distinction between "transhistoric" or "primitive" labor and "labor under capitalism." Marx famously defines primitive labor as that in which human effort combines with nature to produce use-value; here the laborer transforms both nature as well as himself, realizing himself fully as a free and willing subject, provided of course that the commons has not yet been subjected to the historical process of enclosure (344). This form of labor is indeed present in the text, namely in the subsistence activities with which the day laborers supplement their meager wage income.

It is crucial to note here that Hans Kirk portrays such primitive labor as inherently possessed of a profound spirit of solidarity, as when the recently proletarianized *husmand* Marinus joins the day laborers in an eel fishing expedition:

> "Yeah, yeah Marinus," Lars Sjældenglad said. "So you've been out scraping a living together with the rest of us." "I've done that before today," Marinus said. "All the same, we stick together, Lars Sjældenglad said . . . There was a meaning in the words which Marinus grasped. He'd been weighed and approved. His heart was full of warmth, as if he were still standing and warming himself up in the glow of the bonfire. (54)

This basic sense of solidarity among the rural proletariat can also manifest itself within the text in a nascent form of class struggle. This is most evident, once again, through the figure of Marinus, all of whose efforts at obtaining assistance from his fellow *husmænd* fall on deaf ears. In absolute contrast he is warmly welcomed by his new class fellows, Lars Sjælenglad, even suggesting that the concept of the strike is not unknown to the day laborers:

> 'Yeah, you see, now you're one of us," he said and smiled good-naturedly. 'And we'll surely live together like good neighbors. I mean, we are accustomed to seeing to it that we don't poach on each other's preserves.' And Lars Sjælenglad explained that when the big farmers offered a day-wage that was much too low, the day laborers agreed not to work for that man. (39)

In "labor under capitalism," as neatly summarized by Damsgaard, it is in contrast the means of production that becomes the subject, while the laborer is wholly objectified; in the subjugation of use value to the law of value, the worker's relationship to her labor therefore is characterized as one of *alienation* (16-17). Damsgaard in essence charges that Hans Kirk errs in presenting an unbroken line between the inherent solidarity of primitive labor and the fully formed, class conscious solidarity characteristic of organized labor under capitalism; in effect, the author has mixed up the two conceptions of labor:

> Kirk operates with a transhistorical and one dimensional concept of labor, which does not consistently comprehend that labor in the novel in fact is subsumed under capital, and that it therefore in both the dimensions of the physical and of consciousness functions oppressively upon the worker. Precisely because work is only understood in its transhistorical configuration, the revolutionary character of the working proletariat is attributed to an ahistorical, always present character, which lies latent in the historically bound laborer. (51)

The author has thus allegedly *valorized* the process of labor, suggesting that it is work *slet og ret* [pure and simple] that is the principal vehicle of class emancipation, when in fact, at least according to orthodox Marxism, it is only organized labor under the specific conditions of capitalist production which provides the necessary precondition for such. For Damsgaard, then, the double novel is ultimately a failure as a Marxist exercise, in that the author not only fails to demystify the mystification of capitalism, but even seems to serve its interests, in effect portraying the workers as engaged in ultimately capital affirmative activity. Damsgaard's evaluation of the text, curiously enough, does suggest that the double novel should be considered successful as a specifically cultural radical project, for his inventory of what he sees as the novel's actual concerns reads like a kind of cultural radical laundry list: the decline of the patriarchal family structure and of bourgeois ideology in general, feminism, sexual emancipation, and finally the organization of the working class (56).

Damsgaard's reading of *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider* has engendered considerable criticism, most notably from Ole Ravn and from the authors of the 1979 monograph *Arbejde of Dagligt Brød*; a brief consideration of these responses, additionally, also sheds light on the crucial question of why in fact Hans Kirk chose not to reproduce the third and final volume of the planned trilogy after the war. In his scathing review of Damsgaard's

monograph, Ravn addresses the alleged ill-formed nature of Kirk's Marxism head on, suggesting that the critic has profoundly erred in his insistence that "*Daglejerne* and *De ny tider* can be understood as a double novel" (136). For Ravn the fact that Kirk had planned as well as written a third installment of the trilogy cannot be simply ignored; indeed he goes so far as to liken Damsgaard's exclusive concern with the two published volumes as an example of "almost New Critical fanaticism," which in the Marxist dominated Danish academy of the 1970s amounted to fighting words indeed (137). There is indeed some justification for this critique, given Hans Kirk's own comments in a 1948 interview, provided when the author was reportedly at work on the reproduction of the text:

> In this last volume I portray the period in which the dream of industrialism's blessings are shattered. Rationalization brings about a total catastrophe in the little society . . . The number of workers in the cement factory in the little town sinks from 1500 to 300, and since the majority of them have bought houses it means that they are stuck in complete misery. The moral is that the human being himself must intervene in his existence and not let himself be controlled by the play of anonymous forces. (140)

The rationalization experts (in today's parlance the consultants, backed of course by their masters among the private equity cartels), it seems, were on the way; Hans Kirk's abortive trilogy, if anything, reminds us that Youngstown and Flint have always been with us, that the practice of the "off-shoring" of labor so familiar to us in the age of economic globalization is, in the end, really nothing more than old wine in new bottles. The effective deindustrialization of Alslev as portrayed in the third novel, argues Ravn, would have exposed the Social Democrats' revisionist ideology for the false path that it is, and Hans Kirk's Marxist true colors would have shown through.

Ole Ravn's explanation for why the third novel was never completed is simply that the author had begun to feel that his journalistic work with *Land og Folk* had come to take precedence (140). This is admittedly less than satisfying, given that, as has been mentioned, Hans Kirk did see fit to reproduce the text of *Slaven*, the other novel written and ultimately lost under German captivity during the war. The (collective!) authors of the monograph *Arbejde og Dagligt Brød*, in contrast, would seem to be on firmer ground here. Engelund and coauthors, in essence, dismiss both Damsgaard and Ravn on the grounds that they have failed to treat the text according to the particular ideological bent of the author himself; each errs in holding up the double novel against an abstracted and largely internationalist conception of Marxism that is fundamentally at odds with the social reality of interwar Denmark. According to Engelund et al, Damsgaard misreads the text by focusing excessively on the "totalizing effect" of capitalist production, by applying the standard of the heavily industrialized and urbanized economies of the larger European states on still largely agrarian and rural Denmark (155). Thus Hans Kirk's decision to set the story in rural Alslev results not from an insufficient understanding of Marx and of capitalist production, but on the contrary from a far greater understanding of economic and social conditions on the local level, conditions which, the authors assert, were of exclusive concern to the author, e.g. the double novel ought to be read first and foremost as a *national*, rather than international work. Ravn's critique is similarly dismissed, for in arguing that Hans Kirk does in fact possess a sufficiently sophisticated understanding of the Marxist critique of capitalism, the critic is just as much failing to evaluate the double novel on its own terms. Engelund et al further offer a stinging rebuttal to Ravn's explanation for

why the third novel was never reconstructed, for if, as Ravn insists, Hans Kirk was motivated always in the main by loyalty to the DKP, then why would he have allowed the "double novel" to stand when the worldview expressed in its truncated form was so expressly contrary to the worldview of the author? The answer to this most fundamental of questions provided by the authors of *Arbejde of Dagligt Brød* is that, in the end, and of course entirely commensurate with the post-war development of the DKP, Hans Kirk's views on class struggle fundamentally *moderated*. After the outbreak of the Cold War and the subsequent stinging electoral defeat of the DKP in 1947, Danish communists largely abandoned their harshly critical stance toward the Social Democrats, instead recasting themselves as the party of "peace, freedom and democracy" rather than that of class struggle; after 1947 the DKP in fact sought common ground with Social Democrats, as earlier it had in the heyday of the mid- to late-1930s *folkefront* strategy against fascism. Thus according to Engelund et al, Hans Kirk's "failure" to reproduce the third novel was in fact a conscious choice, for "the publication of the third volume would have been in contrast to the interests of the party" (168).

Perhaps the most useful—and certainly with respect to our contemporary concerns the most interesting—appraisal of the "double novel" is however to be located in Carsten Jensen's 1981 study *Folkelighed og utopi*, among the last of the monographs on Kirk written during his critical peak in the 1970s. It is notable that each of the previous accounts addressed have attempted to relate the text to Marxism, either in its orthodox sense or in the particular iteration it would take in Denmark during the interwar period. Jensen, in sharp contrast, is much more concerned with Hans Kirk's relation to the *literary past*, with

a conception of the author that views him as the proper inheritor of the *folkelig gennembrud* and of the longer tradition of *bondelitteratur* that informs it; for Jensen "he is the first Marxist-inspired author in Denmark, but in a certain sense also the last representative of *bondelitteratur*" (32). As has been previously noted, it is the factory that comes to Alslev rather than the inverse, but this is not only just a result of the particular nature of industrialization in Denmark, it is also indicative of much more, in that it provides the means by which Hans Kirk may tap into the latent desire for a better world—what Ernst Bloch referred to as utopian function—that is characteristic of the pre-industrial, old order *almuekultur* of Denmark and indeed arguably of all rural and semi-feudal societies across the globe. Orthodox or "scientific" Marxism, as is well known, stresses the absolute *rupture* between the pre-industrial and the industrial worlds, an emphasis that no doubt owes much to the abrupt and rather violent manner in which England and Germany, the two countries which Marx knew best, had undergone industrialization. As such it is profoundly dismissive of the utopian aspirations of the old order, that which Jensen aptly describes as "the dream of 'a thousand year kingdom, of "the triumph of the good," of "the land of Cockaygne" (31). Thus what for Damsgaard constitutes the double novel's fatal flaw is for Jensen its greatest strength, as the critic aptly notes how the evermore "scientific" nature of orthodox communism as it unfolded in the 20th century resulted in its eventual divorce from the very "motives which drive human beings to action" (27). In Kirk, as well as in the work of that other "*kommunist i et bondeland*," Martin Andersen Nexø, we encounter a Marxism that is paradoxically infused with the *folkelig*:

> These elements in their authorships do not allow themselves to be separated from one another, the inheritance from the past, the peasant radicalism, and the conceptions of socialism are woven in and mutually condition one another. In the old forms of folk-life, the feudal peasant's dream of happiness and freedom, Nexø and Kirk have garnered strength and inspiration for their conceptions of a better life. This untimeliness, the inheritance from a pre-capitalist past, makes up an important part of their work. (31)

A particularly revealing example of the old order utopian aspiration at work in the text may be located in the figure of the union leader Cilius, who in many ways functions as the mouthpiece of the author's own ideology over against that of the revisionist Børgesen. Towards the end of *De ny tider*, after the successful effort at attaining the eight hour workday, Cilius invokes a novel take on an old folk idiom to express his hopes for the future: "And it can get even better . . . We definitely can't be content. We're going to have our cake and eat it too" (494). The latter sentence in this (otherwise masterful!) English translation is the customary rendering of the Danish idiom "Man ville både i pose og i sæk" [literally "one wants to get into both the bag and the sack"], commonly employed to describe an unreasonable demand. But what Cilius actually says is "Har vi fået i posen, skal vi også kræve sækken fuld" (206), literally "Now that we have gotten into the bag, we ought to demand that the sack be full." It is arguable that this blunter rendering better evokes the utopian function evoked by the words of the union chief.

It must be conceded here that the question of whether or not *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider* constitute a "sufficiently" Marxist exercise is for our present age largely moot, for as Göran Therborn has mournfully noted, "the global confluence of left-wing political defeats and social meltdowns in the last two decades of the twentieth century was, by any

measure, overwhelming" (114); in a more narrow Danish context, Carsten Jensen himself admits, all the way back at the moment when the Neoliberal ascendancy was only in its infancy, that regarding "the socialism of which Kirk dreamed and saw realized in the Soviet Union, there are hardly many socialists today who can identify with it" (35). The social world of the double novel is of course irrecoverably lost to us, and yet this is once again by no means to suggest that the text does not still speak to us, that there is much that may be excavated from it, that Hans Kirk still has something of immense value to teach us as we humanists look to renew the all but moribund struggle for class emancipation in our part of the world and indeed the globe over. As has been indicated, the central narrative of the text is the story of the gradual transformation of a rural and agrarian semi-feudal society into that of industrial modernity, albeit of a decidedly rural flavor. As such, the double novel is very much the story of the rising in the world of an old order, rather ruthlessly exploited *landproletariat*, a phenomenon that, given the ever increasing practice of labor "off-shoring" by Northern industrial concerns, has come to reproduce itself all over the contemporary South, on an ongoing, even day to day basis. Eric Hobsbawm notes that this transition to a "transnational process of manufacture" was already underway by the mid-1960s, and that even in the early years from 1970 to 1983, before the meteoric rise of China, the share of industrial input from the Third World doubled from five to ten per cent (280); Chris Harman further estimates that today fully 60% of the world's industrial workers are located outside the OECD countries (337). It is arguable that it is this very process, the industrialization of the South, rather than the deindustrialization of the North or for that matter the migration of peoples from South to North, that constitutes the central

story of our age, for it is in the vast industrial parks of Guangdong that human lives in the tens and even hundreds of millions are being transformed.

The relentless pace with which this process is currently being undertaken can seem all but bewildering, and yet, improbably enough, Hans Kirk can in some ways help us to comprehend it, if only in the sense that his double novel provides us with a view of industrialization from the perspective of those who experience it most directly and concretely, namely the rural *landproletar* turned industrial worker. And as has been indicated the picture of the "New Times" as presented in the text is overwhelmingly of an edifying and essentially positive nature; indeed, that the former day laborers stand on the cusp of a dramatic improvement in their material conditions is made apparent immediately by the aforementioned Engineer Høpner, whose speech upon the opening of the plant reads like Marx's notion of machine fetishism made manifest (and also, not coincidentally, reveals the author's implicit critique of the concept of social partnerism):

> Folks . . . We've done a piece of work and now we're celebrating. We've built a building and we've filled it with machinery. Where before there was a cliff with poor soil, which could barely give people a living, we've erected an enterprise that can give us all our daily bread . . . The machine can give us a carefree living . . . The machine puts the food on the table and the clothes on our backs. Without the machine a modern society can't exist . . . If the machine stops, life stops. (263)

And the lives of the former day laborers *do* improve, from the initial enticement of a reliable wage source, on through the gradual erection of a sturdy working class housing district as the former day laborers escape their hovels as well as, most importantly, the organization of a labor union which ultimately results in the most vulnerable members of society for the first time beginning to assert a degree of control over their own existences. That Hans Kirk's portrait of

the social transformation in Alslev is fundamentally an idealized portrait must certainly be conceded, for as Marc Linder has noted, a fellow socialist who in 1915 visited the actual factory on which the fictional plant was based "was prompted by the noise, dust, and 12-hour shifts to characterize it as a 'hell,' a 'prison,' as 'wage slavery in pure form without any mitigating circumstances'" (xxix). A hell the factory may have in fact been, at least from the perspective of an outsider unversed in the conditions of labor prior to its coming, and yet the alternative, rather sunny side perspective presented by Hans Kirk is of no less significance; moreover, the double novel serves to remind us in our present age that nearly as much of the motor of industrialization comes *from below*, from those *landproletarer* seeking better life conditions wherever they may be found, than it does from the commanding heights of globalist capital. Why do the world's remaining *landproletarer* freely enter into the yawning gates of the factory and thus willingly submit themselves to their own exploitation? Because its appeal is *irresistible* to them, because, in the end, the exploitation of industrial labor is considerably *less* exploitative than that of traditional agricultural labor. We in the human sciences must, without sliding into the perilous territory of Neoliberal apologetics, constantly keep this essential truth front and center as we seek to comprehend the functioning of globalist capitalism around the contemporary globe.

Daglejerne and *De ny tider* tell a tale of the rising in the world of an emergent working class; and yet at the same time the double novel is, unavoidably enough, the story of certain *individuals* rising in the world. It is arguably precisely here that Hans Kirk has the most to teach us, for the text of the double novel serves to illuminate the inner tension, so rarely discussed in our "post-industrial" and "post-Marxist" era, between the emancipation of the individual and the emancipation of social class. Previously the concept of individual emancipation has accordingly

been discussed in only its most edifying and ennobling aspect, namely that of the right of the human individual to develop her humanity freely and without artificial constraint, and yet there is an alternative, *economic* side to the issue of individual emancipation as well. As described by Damsgaard, this essentially *bourgeois* notion of individual emancipation amounts to "the single individual's possibilities for . . . winning a place in the social hierarchy corresponding to the single individual's 'natural abilities' and 'hard work'" and is exemplified in the case of Høpner the self-made man, the very "incarnation of 'the American Dream'" (49-50). As has been suggested, Hans Kirk in the double novel presents the phenomenon of the economic emancipation of the individual as a kind of *temptation*, as a false pathway that ultimately comes at the *expense* of class emancipation: "It is clear that if the worker prioritizes the possibility of individual emancipation over that of collective liberation, he will not be very active in the organization of labor and the class struggle" (50). Of particular interest to Damsgaard here is the manner in which the proletarianized *husmænd* in the text, with one foot still in the old semi-feudal order, seek to use the surplus generated by wage labor at the factory in order to return to the land; this is most clear in the case of Marinus, who quixotically longs for a return to his lost farm animals, and even more so in Boel-Erik, who actually tries to put such a plan into practice by attempting to clear the patently un-clearable land of his rather miserable smallholding. Høpner himself describes the profound, yet fundamentally self-destructive appeal of the old system of production upon this class:

> In reality there's no social class that's worse off than agriculture's smallholders . . . They have to slave away their twelve-fourteen hours a day and have to grossly exploit their wives' and children's labor. And in spite of everything the smallholders are satisfied. Why? Because they've been made to believe they own something . . . Get a man to believe that he's working for himself, and you can get him to slave away twice as hard. That's modern industrial psychology. (166)

A further example more familiar to present conditions, and one which may very well have been lifted from the author's own unhappy experiences at Sorø, is to be located in the figure of young Søren, the gifted son of Marinus who, through the intervention of the local schoolteacher, the reliable Grundtvigian Ulriksen, is permitted to study at gymnasium and ultimately for a degree in Copenhagen. Revealing the essential cultural radical mistrust of all things academic, Søren's gradual drift away from the values of his homeland is documented with biting sarcasm, at one point, in a letter responding to the news of a local girl's misfortune, even invoking Andersen's old tale "Children's Prattle":

> He was very angry about what Olga had done. Fortunately, the matter, of course, hadn't even gotten into the capital's newspapers, Søren wrote, otherwise it would certainly do him harm. He'd just applied for a scholarship and gotten it, and he was determined to take a new name. "Søren Jensen is of course too common," his letter said. "I've decided to call myself Søren Alslev. The petition doesn't cost much—it can be had for four crowns. (377)

Søren's inevitable decision to "go in for an academic career" (in medieval philology, no less!) is greeted with profound disgust by the Grundtvigian Ulriksen, here shown in a surprisingly positive light:

> "That's a damn rotten idea, Søren . . .Your father's a day laborer, your mother a splendid woman, your brothers are unskilled laborers, you have the whole people's destiny with you as your marching kit. What do you mean by sitting and cramming lessons with better people's children. The rich will definitely get their information, but how will the little people get their share of the knowledge of the times . . . We don't need stupid academics, because we have enough of them, but people who've seen a glimpse of the free, open sky that Grundtvig beheld. The people's freedom, my son, that's what you should be fighting for." (357)

Individual emancipation *at the expense of* collective emancipation, the pressing question of whether the single human individual must strike out on her own or whether she ought to throw in

her lot with the collectivity, this is the essential tension at the heart of the double novel's characterization of its manifold of individual characters.

With respect to our present age, it must be conceded here that we have largely answered this most essential of questions. In many ways the central aim of the Neoliberal project could be said to have been the recasting of our conception of social change from its by nature collective character to that of a matter for the single individual; this could in fact be understand to be an effort at *the false individualization of mass social change*. Here is David Harvey on Margaret Thatcher, the very high priestess of the Neoliberal ascendancy:

> There was, she famously declared, "no such thing as society, only individual men and women"—and, she subsequently added, their families. All forms of social solidarity were to be dissolved in favour of individualism, private property, personal responsibility, and family values. The ideological assault along these lines that flowed from Thatcher's rhetoric was relentless. "Economics are the method," she said, "but the object is to change the soul." (23)

She may not have entirely eradicated the collective aspect of the human soul, but the essential message that we communicate to all those on the butt end of globalist capitalism, *this season's losers of the year*, so to speak, could not be more clear: in the new order you are on your own, you must emulate the behavior of the winners and see only to the interests of you and your own, and to hell with anyone who attempts to get in your way. Another of Neoliberalism's prominent apologists, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, has offered up a particularly distilled iteration of this kind of logic in a January 2012 essay, written in some ways as a scolding response to the worldwide outbreak of collective action that had so defined the previous year:

> In the past, workers with average skills, doing an average job, could earn an average lifestyle. But, today, average is officially over. Being average just won't earn you what it used to. It can't when so many more employers have so much more access to so much more above average cheap foreign labor, cheap robotics, cheap software, cheap automation and cheap genius. Therefore, everyone needs to find their extra

> — their unique value contribution that makes them stand out in whatever is their field of employment. *Average is over. (A29)*

Friedman's inability to grasp rather basic mathematical concepts may stand out as rather painfully embarrassing here, and yet as always he can be relied upon to provide us with an absolutely undisguised picture of the Bourdieuean infernal machine at work in the world.

Such tortured logic, indeed, cries out for what has here been termed "collectivist counter-production," and it is here argued, once again, that Hans Kirk's double novel may very well be a useful starting point. As has been indicated, *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider* are very much the story of a rising in the world, both of a particular social class and of select individuals, and with respect to the latter the double novel very much speaks directly to our present age, which has seemingly fetishized individual accomplishment to a degree approaching that of hagiography; one thinks here of the recent deification of Steve Jobs, or, even more pertinently, the exasperation expressed by the global news media at the "inability" of the manifold of the street protests of 2011 to produce any significant "leaders." In the double novel, two single figures from the lowest orders of the village society stand out as particularly valuable examples here, especially when they are thrown into relief of one another, the former day laborer turned real estate entrepreneur Bregentved and the aforementioned Cilius, long before the opening of the narrative a hell-raising navvy, then an Alslev *husmand*, after drinking away his smallholding a humble day laborer, and, finally, after his rise to local union leader at the factory, a big man in his own right. As Damsgaard has noted, the text of the double novel is marked by what he describes as a kind of "double consciousness," according to which there is a considerable gap between the day laborers' understanding of their own social conditions/exploitation and the more developed class consciousness of the author himself; the figures of Bregentved and Cilius stand

out in that they provide glimpses of the latter, from very early on the text (33). Here is Bregentved, exhibiting a remarkably sophisticated understanding of market economics and wage labor:

> Now look . . . it's going to be a poor potato harvest this year, the farmers are telling us that every day: the potatoes are so small and pitiful it can hardly pay to dig them up. But they get them out of the ground anyway, and they don't pay us a fortune in day-wages. And when they are sold, the prices are high because the potato harvest failed. Their making more than they usually do. They'll certainly know how to get the money where it is. It's our own fault. We don't know anything about making calculations. (47)

And here is Cilius, consoling Marinus on the loss of his farm, thereby demonstrating a highly developed comprehension of the near sharecropper-like conditions under which the banks hold down the *husmænd*:

> 'You could have kept it going for a long time yet. Look at me. I'm up to my eyeballs in crap just like you. But I'm not going to give up my farm as long as I can hold on to it. I sold one of my horses and two of the cows. If I'm short money, I'll sell more of my livestock.' 'That's really not legal. And I can't bring myself to do it,' Marinus said, frightened. 'I mean you're stripping the assets.' 'It's legal to sell of the livestock if a fella can't provide the feed for it . . . Am I supposed to let the animals starve? Show me a place where I can get a loan or credit?' (29)

As Carsten Jensen has further noted, the grand party which Cilius stages, in which the last of his pigs is roasted for the consumption of his new comrades among the day laborers, constitutes a kind of "social protest, an open break with the right of private property that the bankers' share in the husmænds' enterprises represents" (141).

The above-cited excerpts provide a suggestion of the eventual directions which the fundamental dissatisfaction with present reality exhibited by the two characters will take; for Bregentved this involves the path of individual emancipation, the effort to escape the poverty of his origins through entrepreneurial élan, while for Cilius the journey is to be collective, in throwing in his lot with his new found class comrades as their local union leader. Were the

double novel not written according to the particular principles of the proletarian collective novel, were it, say, to have been conceived more along the lines of the values of our present age, then it would most likely have centered its focus on the figure of Bregentved, a portrait in miniature of the *nouveau riche* goulash barons of the war years, who refuses to accept the limited horizons of his meager birthright, instead striking out as a traveling fishmonger, before ultimately leveraging his not inconsiderable success in this into what can only be described as subprime real estate empire, born atop the shaky foundation of the wartime boom in land prices due to the inflated demand for Alslev's cement. As collective novelist Hans Kirk is by definition adamantly opposed to the idea of the *bildungsroman*—for Kirk and his contemporaries this form represents the most retrograde and irredeemably bourgeois of all genres—and yet it is still of some use to view the development of Bregentved and Cilius within such a lens. With respect to Bregentved, the concept of the *anti-bildungsroman* is most pertinent, for the more success he attains out in the world, the more obstacles he is able to overcome, the more fundamentally depraved and dishonest his conduct becomes, resulting first in the attempted sexual assault of his secretary and then, rather predictably, in the ultimate total collapse of his real estate business, an almost immediate victim of the deflating of the war era bubble. In the development of Cilius, in absolute contrast, we are confronted with a kind of embedded proletarian *bildungsroman*, to return to Foley's typology. The future union chief enters the narrative as a profoundly anti-social, even nihilistic figure, regularly boasting of how as a navvy he had once "beat a man until he was a cripple," drinking and partying away the smallholding he had obtained through marriage, a marriage that results in his cuckolding and that bears all of the marks of a proletarian

version of the typical Strindbergian nightmare. The questionable character of Cilius the *urproletar* is indeed an issue during the union elections:

> 'A fella practically doesn't know anybody better than Cilius,' Marinus said, and the others laughed. 'Now don't laugh, because he's not afraid, that guy,' Marinus said, a bit offended. 'He stood up to a lawyer and the authorities. There's never been anybody who made short work of him.' The others conceded that Cilius was all right, but he had a weakness for drinking and a chairman definitely had better keep sober. (228)

The reservations of the workers, however, prove to be entirely unfounded, for in the labor movement Cilius finds a socially affirmative outlet for his naturally aggressive tendencies, a kind of coming into his own which results in his domestic rehabilitation as well: "There was rebelliousness in Cilius, but at home he was a man of peace" (451).

There is only a single moment in the text of the double novel in which Bregentved and Cilius cross paths, and it is particularly revealing. Cilius is with Lars Sjælenglad and Børgesen for a meeting of the consumer cooperative's executive committee; because of the recent "sin tax" placed on liquor by the ruling Social Democrats, a measure which Cilius views as an act of class betrayal, it is the only time of the month in which the workers can afford to patronize the village inn, which some time before had "scaled up" into a venue predominately for Alslev's emergent smart set:

> In the other room there was a din: Bregentved was having a party with two cattle dealers . . . A huge roar resounded from there: they were really knocking back the drinks, Lars Sjælenglad said, but, of course, they also had the money for it. But Cilius looked toward the door angrily and suddenly he opened it. 'Could you tone down the fun, folks,' he said. 'There are also other people in the world.' Bregentved turned his blotchy face toward him. 'Come in the room, Cilius, and have a round,' he said. 'You're welcome to bring the people you're sitting with.' But that's not what Cilius had in mind. 'Thanks, but I don't drink on another man's money,' he said. 'But you people've got to be quiet—we can't stand the noise." (457)

Two former day laborers who have made their way in the world, the one through (albeit soon to be lost) self-enrichment, the other through collective action, and yet both are equally now big men in the eyes of the larger world. It is tempting to write off this episode as merely the friendly ribbing of two former comrades at day labor, as the tacit recognition of the very different choices each has made, and yet it is also likely something more. In the first place it is clear that Cilius' refusal to drink on another man's dime constitutes an implicit critique of Bregentved as horse trading capitalist; no doubt the supreme wheeler and dealer would have embroiled the cattle dealers in his rather hair-brained investment schemes, bringing them down along with he himself. But there is also, arguably, a suggestion within the subtext that Bregentved is, in the seemingly innocuous offer to stand a round, also attempting to bring Cilius on board: "Have I got deal for you, for all that pension money laying around collecting dust," one could easily imagine Bregentved saying. *This is how it begins*, the author seems to be suggesting, this is how the collective solidarity of the labor movement is ultimately turned towards the interest of the private individual, how even the best of collective intentions can be corrupted and abused and turned on their head. That Cilius refuses to even consider a seat at the grown ups table is a testament to the relentless optimism the animates the entirety of *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider*.

Daglejerne and *De ny tider*, in summary then, provide the contemporary reader with a striking demonstration of how a ruthlessly exploited traditional *landproletariat* may, through the intervention of industrial modernity, come to realize its old order utopian expectations in the concrete objectives of organized trade unionism. And yet we must not overlook that this stubbornly optimistic outlook is ultimately undermined at the conclusion of *De ny tider*. The workers are gathering in their newly built meeting hall to celebrate the wedding anniversary of

Frederikke and of Cilius, who has recently lead them in the successful struggle for the eight hour workday. The banquet is as much an announcement of the arrival of the formerly destitute day laborers as a politically formidable, financially secure working-class as it is an anniversary party. Cilius himself relates his own personal odyssey: "I came to the farm twenty-five years ago without a shirt on my back, and afterward I drank the farm away. I was a navvy—that's the way we were back then. But now times are different, folks, now we've got it damn good" (498). Meanwhile, over in the factory office, manager Høpner glumly receives the new quarterly income statement from his assistant Laurids: "Profitability, Laurids . . . Profitability, that's an infernal word . . . It's going to hell . . . We're operating at a roaring loss. The price of cement is falling every week— there's got to be a change or else we'll have to stop" (497). What was to have been a coming out party for a newly emerged working class has become, cruelly enough, the harbinger of its coming decline, for as has been noted, the lost third novel was meant to portray the eventual *deindustrialization* of Alslev, with of all of its catastrophic consequences for the workers. A fundamentally happy tale of a people's arrival in the world would have been revealed to be, in the end, a sad and pitiable tragedy. That the tragic ending of this story was ultimately lost and never recovered is indeed an immense loss to all of world literature.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

I want everything and two of some of this shit.

-Tim Kinsella

Having now investigated in some detail two of the leading lights of cultural radicalism during the interwar period, we shall now return, in a brief survey of important developments in the postwar era, to the movement as a coherent whole, as a collectivity. Herein we shall see that the rather hard won rapprochement between the twin poles of the movement, those of individual and of class emancipation, begins to suffer rather serious cracks. Mention has already briefly been made of the controversy surrounding the production of cultural radical (and communist) veteran Kjell Abell's *Den blå pekingeser* in 1954, which had resulted in the round condemnation of the author in the bourgeois press. But Abell had earlier set off another controversy, this time around from the opposite end of the political spectrum. In his1947 play *Dage paa en Sky* [Days in the Cloud], Abell had seemed to suggest that the cultural radicals had erred in their close alliance with the communists: "I have heard about a justice that is still justice, even though it is attained through injustice. And a freedom that is not freedom, but a circumscribing of the will" (99). Sensing a small measure of daylight between cultural radical and communist, Erik Seidenfaden asserted that Abell had "given expression to a West European sense of unease with and protest against an idealistic socialism's transformation into a Jesuitical doctrine of power," in effect giving voice to "that tendency which in its own way will fight for humanism, freedom, tolerance, conscience, respect for the law, and an unwillingness to do violence by dismissing all

these things" (Madsen 316-17). Here the critic suggests, without pulling punches, that Henningsen's grand democratic summer program is threatened less from the Right than from the Left, specifically the new authoritarian socialism emerging in the Eastern bloc. In addition to this critique from the humanist Left, Abell was of course also under fierce attack in 1947 from the bourgeois press for his play, leading the communist daily *Land og Folk* (at which Kirk was a contributor) to organize an event in support of the playwright, but the coup in Prague had resulted in many of the leading attendees canceling their participation in protest. Kirk would offer up a full-throated rebuttal of this faction in an editorial that reads like a direct refutation of Seidenfaden's revisionism:

> I absolutely do not believe that these artists consciously desire to work against the democracy that is rolling forward in Eastern Europe, but I believe they are lacking the preconditions to express themselves about what is really happening. Their rebuff is . . . a symptom of the confusion in intellectual circles. (Madsen 317)

As Peter Madsen aptly observes, Seidenfaden and Kirk are here engaged in a battle "for the soul of cultural radicalism," the former representing the side which insists upon the primacy of the individual, the latter staking his claim for the collectivity, and yet each, curiously enough, claiming the mantle of democracy as his guiding principle (317).

The fissures that had begun to appear in the close alliance of cultural radical and communist in the years after the Second World War—we should also make note here of the aforementioned 1947 debate between Poul Henningsen and Albert Olsen, in which PH had for the first time since the 1920s adopted a stance highly critical of the communists—, would reach a breaking point the year after the appearance of Bredsdorff's famous essay, when as is well known Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev would deliver his famous "secret" speech denouncing Stalinism. The physician Mogens Fog, another veteran of the interwar *kulturkamp*, would

confess that "the revelations that have been set upon the table show that we were in error," and moreover that the cultural radicals cannot console themselves with the supposition that "the strictures on political and personal freedom to which one was witness in the socialist countries . . . were necessary and "just" in order to secure a steady upswing in the majority population's welfare . . . which has unmistakably taken place" (Madsen 318). The long love affair between cultural radical and communist, it seems, has reached its conclusion, formally speaking in the aforementioned founding of the Socialistiske Folkeparti in 1959, in which Mogens Fog himself would play no small part.[67] The rupture with Marxist communism that resulted in the foundation of the new party, according to Peter Madsen, amounts to no less than cultural radicalism "coming to itself again," for now once and for all it is the individualist aspect of the emancipatory project that shall be front and center, over and above that of class struggle (319). And as has been indicated, the post-communist cultural radical project would score enormous real world successes throughout the 1960s, as the cultural platform of the SF would gradually become the cultural program of the ruling Social Democrats themselves; this essential absorption of the movement into mainstream Danish political culture further amounts to its effective

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[67] With respect to the two figures examined in this study, it should be noted that Poul Henningsen, ever the independent spirit, did not in his twilight years involve himself in the daily affairs of the SF, but his general ideological development in the 1950s and 1960s most certainly accords with it. Hans Kirk, however, remains the single and most glaring exception to the cultural radical renunciation of communism and of the Soviet Union, for he would, as Marc Linder notes, die "a member of Denmark's Communist Party in good standing (xxxii-iii). Only a year after the Khrushchev speech and the failed uprising in Budapest, Kirk would offer up this defense of the Soviets: "No country in the world has ever undergone a development like the Soviet Union's. While those in the US proclaim that freedom must be circumscribed in order to save capitalism's leading role, freedom flowers in the Soviet Union. For capitalism means thrift, renunciation and restraint, but socialism means freedom and humane honesty" *Frisind* 198.

neutering as an oppositional force, for as Madsen correctly observes, "*cultural radicalism becomes from the 1960s and thereafter institutionalized*" (325).

Turning to more recent developments, the casual observer could be forgiven for presuming that, as has been suggested, the concept of cultural radicalism has largely vanished from the ongoing *kulturkamp* in Denmark. It must be conceded here that it has been a very long time since anyone in Danish public life has proudly assumed the mantle of *kulturradikaler*; one would have to look back to the heyday of the New Radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s, to Klaus Rifbjerg or to Villy Sørensen, for evidence of such. And yet as is plainly apparent to any observer of the national discourse, the idea of cultural radicalism has since the conservative ascendancy of 2001 most certainly been subject to a revival, yet this time almost exclusively, as Niels Peter Skou has observed, "as an object of critique" (330). At the head of this seemingly insurmountable counteroffensive from the Right has most certainly been the redoubtable figure of the "Black Priest" himself, the theologian, politician and author Søren Krarup. Skou has offered up a superb summary of Krarup's critique:

> For Søren Krarup the decisive element in cultural radicalism is its character of atheistic humanism, that is to say its conception of humanity as the goal, the measuring stick, the creator of values, and the center of the world. Out of this philosophical humanism, according to Krarup, there results almost by necessity the development of totalitarian political systems. For Krarup there is talk of a fundamental clash between two views of humanity, namely between "the Dane" and the "human" or between the nation and the abstract concept of "humanity" or "humankind" . . . Humanism is for Søren Krarup the belief that humanity can be self-creating—that human beings themselves form the institutions that form them, so that the human being by herself creating a better and more just society can also create a better and more just human being. Such a cultural and political faith in progress is for Søren Krarup a dangerous illusion, and the history of the Enlightenment is for him a long example of how optimistic utopias transform into totalitarian nightmares. (331)

The elections of 2001, in which the Venstre in partnership with the Conservatives and the rapidly growing nationalist Danske Folkeparti overthrew decades of Center Left rule, amounted to no less than an "ideological systemskift" for Krarup, a "popular" uprising of the "people" which, as he had predicted back in 1994, would permit the Danes to "breathe freely and unrestrained again and to be fond of the Denmark and the Danishness without which we are only half human" (93-4). Much of this rhetoric is familiar to us in our part of the world and on the continent, for Krarup should properly understood to belong to that category which Habermas has termed the "Old Conservatives," who are characterized by the fact that they "do not allow themselves to be contaminated by cultural modernity in the first place" and thereby "recommend instead a return to positions *prior* to modernity" ("Unfinished Project" 53). And yet there is further resonance in this in that much like in the contemporary United States, in which the Right feverishly grasps at the straw men of 1968 (Saul Alinsky, Willam Ayers et al), Krarup is in essence striking out at phantoms, for it his political persuasion and his cultural agenda that have largely set the terms of the national discourse for at least the past decade, the largely broken remnants of the old cultural radical movement most decidedly reduced to a defensive posture. Perhaps the most cruel irony in this is, as Peter Madsen has observed, that the movement that once had defined itself as decidedly oppositional has come to be associated with the very establishment: "Cultural radicalism has gone from representing democracy's form of culture par excellence to being viewed as elitist and undemocratic" (337).

As has been promised, we shall conclude the present study by considering the question of whether or not there is anything of value that we in our Anglophone part of the world who seek

the renewal of the emancipatory project may learn from this rather obscure movement from an obscure country in an even obscurer language. A series of rather formidable reservations must however be articulated before entering into such an enterprise, each of which serves to reinforce the aforementioned acknowledgement that our contemporary social world is of course of a qualitatively different character than that of interwar Denmark. In the first place it is indeed tempting to liken contemporary social conditions to those of the 1930s; we are, of course, since 2008 mired in a deep financial crisis and our ruling Center Left government, moreover, has very much chosen to serve as, to cite Damsgaard's characterization of Stauning's Social Democrats, international capitalism's *sygehjælper*. Yet it must also be observed that the *depth* of the current world financial crisis (with the notable exception of the southern European PIGS) is numerous orders of magnitude lesser than that of 1930s; recall here that Danish unemployment at the beginning of that decade hovered around one third, while we in the contemporary United States seem to have settled on the much more "manageable" figure of roughly eight per cent. The dire economic conditions of the interwar period that had helped to drive the cultural radicals into the Marxist camp are plainly not yet upon us; indeed, in a broader sense, it is fair to say that conditions are hardly yet ripe for a radical rethinking of our forms of social organization. In his 2005 study of utopian literature, Fredric Jameson had, once again, bemoaned our "increasing inability to imagine a different future" from that of globalist turbocapitalism (232). The events of 2008 and thereafter, as decisive as they have been, could not be said to have shaken the very foundations of the international system. That our age has not been radicalized to the degree that the 1930s had been is also possessed of a rather more favorable outcome, namely that our politics, as polarized as they often appear, are not nearly as driven to extremes as they once were.

As Fjord Jensen has observed, the essential cohesion in the interwar cultural radical movement was in some sense a consequence of the rising tide of fascism in Europe; for Fjord Jensen as well as Bredsdorff, the movement would never even have crystallized were it not for the threat bubbling up from the south. At present there is plainly no such unifying threat from the political Right on the horizon; we have indeed endured much from the conservatives in the past decade, from Neocon imperialist adventures to the emergence of the Tea Party. But these developments are and remain a far cry from the reactionary menace that haunted the Europe of the 1930s.

If the Right has not in fact gone over to the extremes of the era of fascism, the same of course can be said for the Left on its part. As has been indicated, cultural radicalism was the product of an age in which the industrial proletariat was very much on the rise, while the ruling bourgeoisie was with near unanimity viewed as on the decline. In accordance with the theory of "scientific socialism" as well as what was seeming to take place on the ground, Poul Henningsen and Hans Kirk could view the coming of the new worker's society as an historical inevitability. Each could therefore, and this is most certainly more the case in Henningsen than in Kirk, *afford* to focus his activities more in the domain of *culture* rather than in the material struggle. As has been indicated, cultural radicalism should be understood to be preoccupied with the *cultural* emancipation of the working class; its material emancipation was largely left to others. Turning to our contemporary world, no such consolation is at all present, as attested almost on a daily basis by the new cottage industry of research into the rise of economic inequality since the Neoliberal ascendancy. While our society has indeed made immense progress with respect to individual emancipation, conditions of social equality, on the other hand, have everywhere been in retreat for decades now; recall here the concept of the "difficulty gap" outlined in the

introduction. In some sense we humanists who choose to attach ourselves to the emancipatory project may be forgiven for our relative lack of resistance to this rising inequality, for as Therborn has aptly observed, the very concept of social class has largely been "displaced" in the discourse of the Left, a victim of the fact that "the developments of post-industrial demography have dislodged it from its previous theoretical or geographic centrality" (140). The emphasis here should be firmly placed on the geographic aspect of this displacement, for Therborn is of course referring to the virtual dissolution of the traditional working class in the North. We have seen how Henningsen made it his central project of the 1930s to persuade the political Left that the *cultural* struggle against bourgeois capitalism was not in fact an unaffordable luxury, that its exclusive concern for the material struggle of the working class was, in essence, counterproductive. With respect to the present age it may be observed that the situation, at least in the Global North, is fundamentally distinct, for now not only has class struggle been deprived of its so-called inevitable triumph, it could even be said to have entered into a period of *dormancy*. Under these dramatically changed conditions it is worth asking the question of whether or not there is in fact a place for specifically cultural struggle within the contemporary emancipatory project, for conditions in the domain of the material would seem to demand that it has become after all an unaffordable luxury. But this is wrong on two counts. In the first place it must be said that if indeed the material struggle of the remaining working class of the North has become by all accounts a lost cause, then perhaps it may be further asserted that *the cultural struggle is precisely where we need to turn our efforts*. Recall here that Henningsen does attribute to culture the capacity to impact the ideological makeup of society, even at one point suggesting that it may indeed possess the ability to tip the balance between Right- and Leftward

movement. What is suggested here, however tentatively, is that by turning our efforts to the domain of culture we can in some way serve to revitalize the material struggle. It should also be observed here that unlike the Denmark of the interwar period, ours is most certainly a globalist and globalizing age; the industrial working class has, once again, not simply disappeared, it has in fact only migrated to the South, where the "old" dynamics of the mortal struggle between capital and labor very much remain at work. And again unlike the cultural radicals, who for all of their vaunted internationalism were really, in the end, primarily concerned with specifically national matters, we ourselves no longer have the luxury of ignoring developments in the South.

These are indeed serious caveats, and yet it is still suggested here that there may in fact be much to learn form the cultural radicals regarding the renewal of the emancipatory project in our part of the world. In the first place we observe here that in the Anglophone sphere the twin poles of the project, the individual and the collective, have largely sundered themselves from one another, at times, it seems, irrevocably. The inevitable frustration of those who seek the emancipation of the working class in the North could arguably be said to have resulted in a situation in which we ourselves, defeated at every turn on the collective front, have largely redoubled our commitment to the individual emancipatory project as a kind of *compensation*. Nowhere is this curious phenomenon more evident than in the recent decision of the marriage equality advocacy group the Human Rights Campaign to name as its spokesperson no less a figure than that of Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein, a robber baron on the order of John

Pierpont Morgan if ever there was one.[68] As worthy a cause as this most certainly is, such pro bono work in no way could be said to absolve Chairman Blankfein of his manifold of sins. The cultural radical movement, at least in the work of Kirk in the 1920s as well as in Henningsen in the 1930s, suggests at the very least that it is indeed possible for a movement for social change to reconcile these twin poles of the emancipatory project, however brief the period of happy harmony may have been.[69] As Fjord Jensen has gone so far to suggest, the movement may very well have thrived precisely under such conditions of inner tension; recall here his assertion that cultural radicalism's "inner dynamic was determined by this tension" and that when it leaned to too far in the one direction or the other it simply lost all of its potency (26). And this (relatively) happy harmony itself may also serve as a lesson for we humanists in our contemporary age. It has previously been noted that interwar Denmark is distinguished from the present in that the threat from the Right was very much of a mortal character, while ours is most certainly an ideologically gentler age; in the absence of a clearly defined enemy we have by no means measured up to the essential unity of the cultural radical movement during the 1930s. The degree to which the cultural radicals were able to set aside their not inconsiderable differences in service of common cause, "something to fight for and something to fight against," in

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[68] The naming of Blankfein by HRC immediately engendered ferocious criticism from the American, an encouraging sign that perhaps we are learning. See for example David Sirota in Salon.com http://www.salon.com/2012/02/14/an_offensive_advocate_for_lgbt_rights/ or Matt Taibi in *Rolling Stone* http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/blogs/taibblog/blankfein-the-wrong-spokesman-for-gay-rights-20120214.

[69] It must be conceded here that the two figures in the postwar period would clash repeatedly, as Henningsen drifted farther and farther away from class struggle, while Kirk became increasingly critically of (bourgeois) individualist emancipation. For more on this conflict see Hertel *PH* 335-6 and Thing *Hans Kirk* 277-80.

Bredsdorff's words, can in some sense serve as an inspiration to us as we seek to renew the emancipatory project under our own very different circumstances.

In the second place a further observation regarding the status of social class in the contemporary Anglo-American world is in order. As has been indicated, the cultural radical movement has been characterized as a kind of "anti-bourgeios bourgeois" movement, a crystallization of intellectuals and artists largely drawn from the ruling bourgeois class who sought to, in effect, "break out of the bourgeois parlor." The social conditions of interwar Denmark could be said to have demanded precisely this, as once again there was an almost universal consensus that the emerging proletariat was on the verge of taking over the reins of society itself, that the old ruling *enhedskulur* was on its way out. With respect to conditions in our social reality, nothing of the sort could be said to be the case, for in the inexorable death march of the organized labor, the transfer of so many millions of traditional working class occupations to other parts of the world, the essential precepts of bourgeois civilization appear to have returned in ever increasingly hegemonic forms. Nowhere is this more apparent than in another of the special preoccupations of the New Gilded Age's titans, that being the "movement" for "education reform" as reflected in the activities of Michelle Rhee and her numerous billionaire backers.[70] Underpinning this rather thinly disguised ruling class initiative is the presupposition that, as has been noted earlier, there is something essentially *wrong* with being born into the working class, that the particular *Lebenswelt* of the underclass is something that

[70] In a strictly Marxist sense the rather curious phenomenon of Mark Zuckerberg donating $100 million dollars to the Newark schools, or Exxon Mobile inaugurating a "Math and Science Initiative" could be said to be nothing more than naked self-interest at work, in that large corporations require a highly educated workforce to function; this is simply the demand for the reproduction of labor at work in a particularly unconcealed fashion.

need be discarded at the very first opportunity, and further that, most improbably of all, the state educational apparatus can and should serve as the primary engine of this "class scrubbing," to employ a particularly blunt phrase. Rhee and her minions at Students First are correct in observing that "it is wrong that one's zip code determines what kind of education one receives," and yet in their insistence that merely "trying harder" at education can redress skyrocketing inequality fundamentally absolves the ruling bourgeois class of any kind of *complicity* in such. It is here that cultural radicalism can serve as a useful guidepost for those of us who see the need for more substantive change in our social organization, for in their relentless critique of the very precepts of bourgeois civilization, they point toward a manner of effectively undermining the bourgeoisie's seemingly unquestioned right to govern and to rule. Recall Henningsen's acute observation that in the absence of an aggressive program of *Arbeiterkultur*, Stauning's Social Democrats were effectively ceding the cultural field to the bourgeoisie. And it is also important to recall here Damsgaard's characterization of Hans Kirk's double novel as an attempt to expose the ontologizing nature of bourgeois ideology. Franco Moretti has, in his aforementioned commentary on Ibsen, identified a fundamental flaw in our very language, in its preference for the term "middle class" over that of the bourgeoisie:

> Now, many historians have doubts about the concept of the bourgeoisie: whether a banker and a photographer, or a shipbuilder and a pastor, are really part of the same class. In Ibsen, they are; or at least, they share the same spaces and speak the same language. None of the English semantic camouflage of the 'middle' class, here; this is not a class in the middle, threatened from above and below, and innocent of the course of the world: this is the *ruling* class, and the world is what it is, because they have *made* it that way. ("Grey Area" 117)

Implicit in this analysis of the Italian expat is that we in the Anglophone world would do well to attempt to insert the term "bourgeois" into our discursive language; at the very least this would

serve to redress much of the class obfuscation that has long plagued our national discourse.

Two additional observations regarding Hans Kirk's *Daglejerne* and *De ny tider* are also instructive to us today. In the first place it must be observed that the double novel, or rather the "truncated trilogy," may at the very least serve to deepen our understanding of the processes of globalist capitalism in our own era. The cycle that would have been fully sketched had the trilogy been completed—from agrarian semi-feudalism through industrialization and reaching its completion in a consequent deindustrialization—is as has been said a cycle that is currently replicating itself all over the global South. What happens in Alslev over the course of roughly three decades (if we include the additional years that would have been portrayed in the lost third novel) is indicative of what could be called the *mobility gap* between on the one hand capital, which of course always was and has increasingly become even more unmoored from specific localities, and that of labor, which of course remains much more rooted in the ground. Commensurate with the rise in the global mobility of capital, the apologists of globalism have made much of the increased mobility of labor in recent decades; indeed, as has been said, the migration of peoples from South to North has become very much (yet somewhat misleadingly, it is argued here) the central narrative of our time. Yet the fact that more and more workers are capable of following capital around the globe belies the far more salient fact that most human beings, for a manifold of reasons too numerous and, for that matter, too obvious to enumerate here, will never settle very far from home.[71] And it is further arguable that the significant

[71] All the way back in 1995, Wallerstein noted the potential peril of what he termed the "boat people option" for the immiserated masses of the Global South. The growing presence of the "Third World within" the core zones of world capitalism, he prophesied, would result in no less than civil war, a new "time of troubles." This is to say nothing of the

increases in labor mobility have more than been offset by far greater increases in capital mobility, thus lengthening the mobility gap to a degree plainly incomprehensible to the early 20th century Danish kiln stoker. And it must be further noted here that conditions for labor organizing in the Scandinavia of the early 20th century could not have been more favorable; this was long before the machinations of the Neoliberal infernal machine had done so much to undermine the very idea of collective action. Now more than ever, it seems, capital exploits the mobility gap in its ever incessant search for "more favorable labor markets," playing off the interests of isolated national labor markets against each other, leaving in its wake a long trail of ruined Alslevs across the globe. And equally now more than ever, therefore, social conditions in the contemporary South cry out for the revitalization of collective structures capable of counteracting this most fundamental of structural power imbalances.

While there is much to gain from Hans Kirk with respect to comprehending the functioning of globalist capital, in particular its longer historical horizon, we in the human sciences of course remain severely limited in what we can actually *contribute* to the ongoing struggle for class emancipation, for the full ownership of one's labor that is in many ways the central struggle of the contemporary global South and, increasingly, given the ongoing impact of deindustrialization, the North as well. And yet when we view the double novel as *collective novel*, as a conscious effort to resist the bourgeois ideological prejudice in favor of individual accomplishment, there is something to be gained here as well. As has been indicated, the collective subgenre, with only a handful of exceptions, did not survive the conclusion of the

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structural limitations of South-North migration, in that demand for cheap labor in the developed economies is hardly unlimited. (161)

Second World War. Post-war novelists, taking Jameson at his word, have largely returned to the *individroman* of old, albeit increasingly the de-centered individual of post-modernity rather than the enlightenment sovereign subject of old. As scholars of literary studies the very least we can do is encourage the revitalization of the largely dormant form of the collective novel, although, as has been indicated, such a process may very well be underway in the separate domain of the long-form television serial. And even more than this, we can as *critics* seek to problematize the contemporary prejudice in favor the novel of the individual, at the very least by making light of the fact that the *individroman*, which our age has largely ontologized, involves a specific *decision* on the part of the author, a decision that, as has been suggested, may very well serve to inadvertently reinforce the Neoliberal ideology. These are small and modest steps, to be sure, and yet they are very much what our age demands of us, if we are not to abandon the emancipatory project altogether.

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