BODY AND LITERATURE

Essays on sensual experience, aesthetic form and bodily/textual identity

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Introduktion

De følgende arbejdspapirer blev præsenteret ved magister-seminaret *Body and Literature*, d. 28.-29. November 2001 (Institut for litteraturhistorie, Århus Universitet).

Seminarets generelle tema 'krop og litteratur' rummer i sig en mængde mulige forbindelseslinjer. Mindst to synes indlysende: Litteratur og kunst, litteratur og identitet. Den førstnævnte – litteratur og kunst – fremhæver litteraturen som én kunstart blandt andre, og fremhæver derved i særlig grad den æstetiske form. Dette fører frem til det første fokuspunkt: *Sanselig erfaring og æstetisk form*. Den sidstnævnte forbindelse udfordrer selve forestillingen om identitet, i forhold til teksten og i forhold til kroppen. Derved fører den frem til det andet fokuspunkt: *Krop og identitet*.

Introduction

The following papers were presented at the M.A.-seminar *Body and Literature*, on Nov. 28th –29th 2001 (University of Aarhus, Dept. Of Comparative Literature).

Within the general theme of the seminar 'Body and Literature' a vast number of possible connections can be made. At least two seem obvious: Literature and art, literature and identity. The former – Literature and art – emphasizes literature as an art-form, one among others, thereby emphasizing the notion of aesthetic form. This leads to the first focuspoint: *Sensual experience and aesthetic form*. The latter questions the very notion of identity, in relation to the text and in relation to the body, thus leading to the second focuspoint: *Body and identity*.

BODY AND LITERATURE

Indholdsfortegnelse:

Del 1:

Del 2:

Jacob Buris Andersen:

Synaesthesia as a Device of Style in the Postromantic Tradition: Paul Verlaine and W. B. Yeats

Abstract:

Synaesthesia is commonly known from psychology and linguistics. In poetry, synaesthesia is a semantic phenomenon not bound to either grammar or syntax. When applied to some aspects of symbolist poetry, it may provide an alternative to traditional ways of approaching perception and the body as integrated parts of the poetic image.

Resumé:

Synæstesi kendes sædvanligvis fra psykologien og linguistikken. Indenfor poesien er synæstesi som semantisk fænomen ikke bundet til hverken grammatik eller syntaks. Anvendt indenfor bestemte aspekter af symbolistisk poesi kan den frembyde et alternativ til traditionelle måder at anskue perception og kroppen som integrerede dele af det poetiske billede.

It is almost a cliché that poetry in the latter half of the nineteenth century emphasise perceptual experiences and searches for a unity between the different senses. Synasesthesia becomes a privileged topic amongst theoreticians of poetry. One major effort can be found in Réne Ghil's *Traité du verbe*, published in 1886 and prefaced by Stéphane Mallarmé. The treaty explores systematically poetic relations between the sounds of letters and other sensorial domains. Similar experiments on a smaller scale can be found among other symbolist poets.

However, such experiments do not present any obvious link to the poetry itself. They largely remain philosophical and/or mystical undertakings that do not guide their readers very far into the particularities of postromantic poetry. This paper presents an alternative view as it attempts to outline what could be done if one wishes to conceive of synaesthesia as an important device of style. These considerations are followed by an analysis of a poem by Verlaine and one by Yeats.

Synaesthesia

First we should define synaesthesia in the context of literary language. Literally, synaesthesia means something like »sensing together« and implies the combination of two or more perceptions. Psychology often restricts the term to denoting only the simultaneous occurrence of two different senses in the same perception, or a transfer from one sense to another.[1] In linguistics, everyday expressions such as »light sound«, »sharp taste« etc. can be classified as instances of synaesthesia.

Within the realm of literary language, classical rhetoric most often subordinates synaesthesia to the metaphor. Following Aristotle, synaesthesia is conceived of as a special kind of metaphor, whose components are characterised by being sensorial terms.

A more contemporary way of conceiving synaesthesia can be found in two articles from the 1970's by the Hungarian

[1] A collection of essays on synaesthesia in psychology is S. Baron-Cohen & J. E. Harrison (eds.), *Synaesthesia. Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell 1997

scholar P. Dombi Erzsébet. He argues that from a linguistic point of view, synaesthesia is based on semantics, rather than grammar or rhetoric. His definition, which is very useful when analysing synaesthetic structures in poetry, is that »synaesthesia is the syntactic relation between elements semantically incompatible, denoting sensations from different sensorial spheres«.[2] That the elements must be semantically incompatible excludes simple instances of attributing two compatible sensorial terms to the base; something 'red' can easily be 'loud' at the same time without transgressing semantic compatibility. And, of course, the elements must belong to different sensorial spheres in order for the relation to qualify as synaesthetic. If a sensorial impression is connected to an abstract notion, Erzsébet uses the word pseudosynaesthesia.

Figure 1[3] represents an instance of pseudosynaesthesia at the top and at the bottom one of synaesthesia proper. The vertical line is the semantic level of sensation. In the pseudosynaesthesia »sweet desire«, only 'sweet' belongs to this axis whereas 'desire' is an abstract term. In the combination »light-trill«, which is an example of synaesthesia proper, both elements, E_1 and E_2, belong to that axis. According to the definition, the two terms also have to belong to different sensorial spheres. The dotted line between E_1 and E_2 is added in order to emphasise that difference. Precisely this feature of synaesthesia is important within the context of image making because it makes the so-called image span greater than in other types of images.

[2] H. D. Erzsébet, »Synaesthesia and Poetry«. *Poetics* 11 (1973), 23-44, p. 24.

[3] After P. Dombi Erzsébet, »On the Semantic Basis of Syneasthesia«. *Revue roumaine de linguistique* 16 (1971), 47-52. Rpt. in »Synaesthesia and Poetry«.

That is, the semantic difference, or, if you like, 'distance' between E_1 and E_2 is considerably greater than, for instance, that between A_1 and A_2 in pseudosynaesthesia. This is also part of the reason why synaesthesia proper, according to Erzsébet, cannot be considered as a full transfer of meaning. The synaesthetic combination does bring different elements together, but their original denotations are never cancelled.

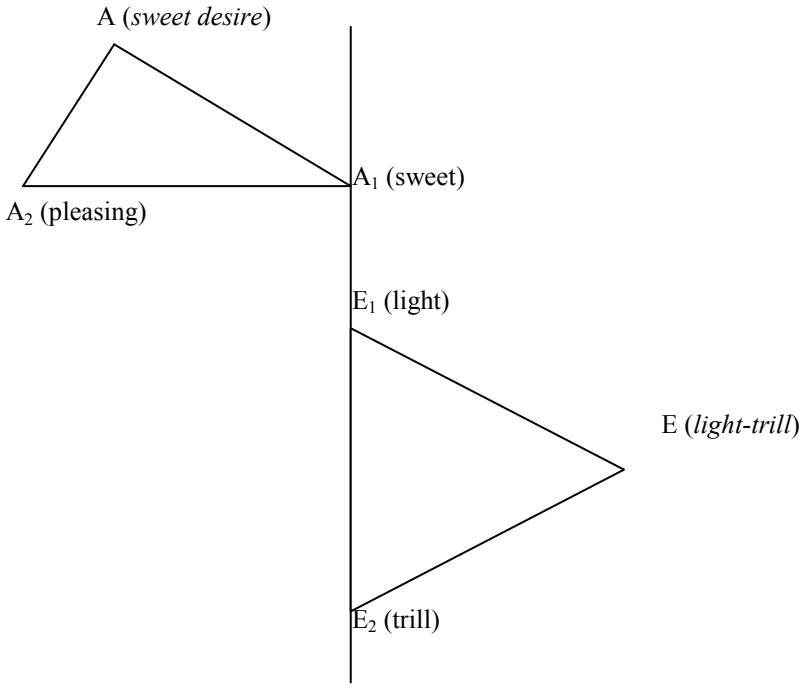

Figure1

Erzsébet's model is useful to our undertaking because it narrows the concept of synaesthesia from the point of view of image formation without making very specific rules as to how the synaesthetic relation should be articulated. It effectively dissociates synaesthesia as a linguistic category from any rhetorical or even grammatical logic. Erzsébet's own analyses of expressionist poetry even imply that sheer syntactic proximity should be enough to warrant the term synaesthesia.

While the model does not make specific claims as to rhetoric or grammar, it does require that the two constituents of the synaesthetic relation should remain semantically on the level of perception.

Two Sonnets

The history of synaesthesia in post-romantic literature is commonly said to begin with Baudelaire's sonnet »Correspondances« (from *Les fleurs du mal*, 1857). The sonnet suggests the existence of a mechanism of correspondences between the different senses, as expressed in the verse »Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent« (»The perfumes, colours and sounds respond each other«). That mechanism is guaranteed by and reveals a cosmological order: certain smells »chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens« (»sing the transports of the spirit and the senses [or: meanings]« as we read in the final verse.[4]

Thus, the sonnet talks about and shows synaesthetic relations, but it locates the source of those relations outside the human sphere, in a cosmological order that completely transcends both body and mind. It seems, however, that the correspondences can only be *experienced* in a certain, ideal state of mind which Baudelaire sought to produce artificially by means of hashish and opium, as seen in his essay »Les paradis artificiels« where the

[4] For an overview of the poem's intertextual relations to a wide range of romantic and mystical sources, see for example J. Culler, »Intertextuality and Interpretation. Baudelaire's 'Correspondances'«. In: C. Prendergast (ed.). *Nineteenth Century French Poetry*. Cambridge: U. P 1990.

doctrine of correspondences is also mentioned. The doctrine can be traced back to the mysticists Jakob Böhme and Emmanuel Swedenborg.

Around 1870 Arthur Rimbaud wrote the sonnet »Voyelles«, perhaps the most famous example of synaesthesia in poetry. Its first verse seems to state a relation between the sounds of vowels and certain colours:

> "A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu : voyelles,
> Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes […]"

Here, the synaesthetic reading is only one option among others. One might also simply understand the letters as coloured letters, written or printed, such as they appeared, allegedly, in Rimbaud's first grade schoolbook.[5] As is well known, these coloured letters are pictorially similar to different parts of a female body.[6] If we accept that the claimed relations between the letters or their phonetic sounds and the colours are at least partly synaesthetic, we must conclude that any supernatural origin of such relations is absent from Rimbaud's poem. On the contrary, the pictorial values of the letters relate the synaesthetic experience to the body and its natural processes, as does all the allusions in the sonnet to

[5] See H. G. Coenen, »Zum Verständnis von Arthur Rimbaud, Voyelles«. *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 75 (1965), 353-64; Etiemble, *Le sonnet des voyelles. De l'audition colorée à la vision érotique*. Paris: Gallimard 1968, p. 149sqq.

[6] See Etiemble, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

organic transformations, such as decay and exchange of bodily fluids.

The two sonnets are perhaps the most obvious examples of synaesthesia in postromantic poetry. In both poems synaesthesia is not just a poetical device, but also a poetic theme. Baudelaire's »Correspondances« is *about* synaesthesia and its cosmological foundation. In its turn, Rimbaud's sonnet is very explicitly divided in two sections: one (i.e. the first verse) that states the synaesthetic (or quasisynaesthetic) relations, and one that explains or comments or elucidates the relations.

Erzsébet's dissociation of synaesthesia from grammatical and rhetorical systems should permit us to apply the term in a broader sense, since the intersensorial relation can be established transversely to logical and/or grammatical structures. Such a broader sense of the term could be applied to symbolist poets who seek to convey complex moods or feelings by attributing unusual symbolic significance to different areas of perception within the same poetical context *without* foregrounding the sensorial combinations on a thematic level.

Paul Verlaine's »Le piano…«

In France, the poetry of Paul Verlaine is a chief example of such a practise. His poetic style is occasionally referred to as 'impressionist', underlining that the central themes of his poems are very seldom subject of description. Rather, the things surrounding it are. The fifth 'forgotten ariette', »Le piano…« (first published 1872, rpt. in *Romances sans paroles* 1874) shows this style in action.

Son joyeux, importun, d'un clavecin sonore
(Pétrus Borel)

Le piano que baise un main frêle
Luit dans le soir rose et gris vaguement,
Tandis qu'avec un très léger bruit d'aile
Un air bien vieux, bien faible et bien charmant
Rôde discret, épeuré quasiment,
Par le boudoir longtemps parfumé d'Elle.

Qu'est-ce que c'est que ce berceau soudain
Qui lentement dorlote mon pauvre être ?
Que voudrais-tu de moi, doux Chant badin ?
Qu'as-tu voulu, fin refrain incertain
Qui vas tantôt mourir vers la fenêtre
Ouverte un peu sur le petit jardin ?

The poem is structured by the movement of the tune from the piano through the room to the window. In the first sestet we also observe a movement through the senses: from vision (the piano *shines*, the evening is *red* and *grey*) through audition (the tune itself) to olfaction (the scent of »Her« in the final verse of the stanza). All things and sensations related to this movement are associated to »Her« and brought together metonymically as the only things we get to know about »Her«. It is possible to speak of synaesthetic relations precisely *because* the metonymical image of »Her« should be read as a unity. Further, the combination of

senses is highlighted in the second verse of the stanza where the piano (which, we must imagine, is being played on) suddenly *lights* or *shines*. Such a succession of different sense-terms is in itself not enough to warrant the name synaesthesia. Rather, the claimed connection *between* the sense-terms adds a combinatorial function to the order of sheer succession: the poem suggests that everything points to »Her«, or even that everything is *part of* her.

In the second stanza focus changes quite suddenly. As soon as the pivotal and enigmatic female character is mentioned, the poet starts apostrophising the tune whose impact is described as physical, or even—to use a psychological term—as a regression. The 'I' of the poem shows itself in this stanza which seems to be commenting on the preceding one. Further exegesis could for example interpret the described things and impressions in the room as components of the memory of the 'I'.

Wiliam Butler Yeats's »The Sorrow of Love«

The same technique that consists of a vagueness on the part of actual reference and description, paired with combinations of different sense terms, is seen in Yeats's well-known poem »The Sorrow of Love« (1893).

The brawling of a sparrow in the eaves,
The brilliant moon and all the milky sky,
And all that famous harmony of leaves,
Had blotted out man's image and his cry.

A girl arose that had red mournful lips
And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,
Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;

Arose, and on the instant clamorous eaves,
A climbing moon upon an empty sky,
And all that lamentation of the leaves,
Could but compose man's image and his cry.

The poem's twelve lines are divided into three quatrains. This division follows the general movement on a thematic level where the arising girl in the second stanza forms the turning point in the movement from the first stanza's »blotted out« to its near-antonym, the third stanza's »composed«.

In the first stanza, the auditory *brawling* is juxtaposed to the unmistakably visually *brilliant* moon as well as to the visual word *milky*—which could be said to possess certain tactile connotations, too. On the one hand we have the confused, negatively valorised audition of *brawling*; on the other the clear and unmixed vision of the word *brilliant*. The combination of those two functions can only be conceived of as disharmonic. This disharmony is, in turn, combined, by the initial *And* in the third verse, to the »famous harmony of leaves«. The result is a very vexing and not very coherent image. In the fourth verse of the first stanza, that image becomes an agent. We learn that it »[h]ad blotted out man's image and his cry«. It is comprehensible that

the profound confusion of the preceding image is likened to the blotting out of an image.

But to state that man's *cry* is blotted out in the same process is a direct, syntactically articulated synaesthetic combination. Such a combination fully underlines the conjunction of audition and vision in the first two verses. The confused sound of *brawling* is confused because of the abundance of sounds that are made obscure by themselves, or disappear in themselves, as it were. The expression *to blot out* also signals that images or words of ink become obscured by the ink itself—and we may perhaps read an allusion to the very verbality of the particular image and to the act of writing itself. And finally, the *image*, if read as the preceding poetic image, also disappears in itself by the abundance of identical leaves. To conclude on the first stanza, the semantic distance between the auditory and the visual terms provides the aforementioned wide image span, since the sensorial terms preserve their original denotations. In other words, the first stanza uses the synaesthetic relation disjunctively—the confusion inherent in the mixing of senses obscures or covers the true identity of »man«.

The thematic changes that occur (or have occurred) in the third and final stanza are profound. The sky is now *empty* and united to the moon and the leaves by the overall sentiment of mourning or *lamentation*. Though the eaves are still *clamorous*, man's image and cry are now *composed*, that is, put to order, but also 'composed' in the way one composes a sentence or a poetic image. Yet, on the phonetic level, hardly any change can be observed. Many words are the same as in the first stanza, and

indeed all the rhyming words are. Further, in *arose* we recognise the sounds of the now substituted *brawling* and *sparrow*, and similarly, phonetic likeness can be noted between the /i/-sounds of *climing* and *brilliant*, between the /a/-sounds of *famous harmony* and *and all that lamentation*, and finally between the /o/-sounds of *blotted* and *compose*.

The change between the opening and the concluding image, phonetically subtle and figuratively radical, is effectuated by the girl in the second stanza. Again we find the allusion to the female body in the middle of a synaesthetic poem. But the body is represented metonymically by a fragment of its totality: the red lips. These and her uprising movement suffice, nonetheless, to make her the rising sun that, for a while, replaces the moon of the first and third stanza. They also suffice to grant her almost all-encompassing mythological proportions, as she is likened to both Odysseus and Priam, the last king of Troy. How to interpret the movement is still not obvious: has the sorrow of love unjustly settled the perceptual strength and innovation of the expressive first quatrain, or is the arising girl the mythological assurance of a symbolic order which was obscured in the first stanza? One would expect the latter to be the case in a Yeats poem, especially since the female lips and the uprising movement are not exclusively related to the sun. As well as »a girl arose…« one may as well hear »a girl a rose that had red mournful lips«, the rose being a recurrent symbol in the early Yeats, and the metaphorical chain lips-petals-sun providing a further poetic qualification of the cosmological unity suggested by the poem's title. Whatever

the answer, further interpretation of the poem would enter a mythological or even political level.

We shall not go that far now, but move on to a few words of conclusion on the synaestetic layers in the poems. In the analysed poems by Verlaine and Yeats, synaesthesia is not hypostasized in the same way as in Baudelaire's and Rimbaud's sonnets. The synaesthetic combinations are for the most part established outside any logical or mystical relation and they themselves are not commented on. Yet, they serve as important stylistic devices in both of the analysed poems, and are pivotal to the construction of certain moods. Such an observation is not intended to question the canonical hierarchy of literature, to which the sonnets of Rimbaud and Baudelaire are considered infinitely more sophisticated than the more sentimental poems of Verlaine and Yeats. It is intended, however, to show how synaesthesia on the level of poetic image formation and interpretation can be found in more subtle and discrete variations within the realms of the impressionist style.

CV:

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Trine Juul:

August Strindberg - the Pioneer of staged Photography?

Abstract:

In 1886 August Strindberg creates his 'Gersau Photographs' which include some of his most famous self-portraits. 'Cross-reading' some of these photographs and a few passages in his autobiography 'En dåres forsvarstale' (1887-88), I wish to state that Strindberg can be considered the pioneer of the so-called 'staged photography' that emerged in the 1970's. Most of this pictural art heralded the fall of the belief in the hitherto unquestioned authenticity of the cameram and in Strindberg's pictures we witness the very same mistrust in the indexical status of the photograph. Furthermore, his pictures expose different attempts to form and challenge male identity in a manner that even today – more than a hundred years later – seems rather thought-provoking.

Resumé:

I 1886 skaber August Strindberg sine 'Gersau fotografier', der inkluderer nogle af hans mest berømte selv-portrætter. Idet jeg 'kryds-læser' mellem nogle af disse fotografier og passager i hans selvbiografi 'En dåres forsvarstale' (1887-88), hævder jeg, at man kan betragte Strindberg som pionér for det såkaldte 'staged photography', der opstod i 1970'erne. Det meste af denne bildende kunst bebudede et opgør med den indtil da ubetvivlede tillid til kameraets autenticitet, og i Strindbergs billeder møder vi nøjagtig mistro til fotografiets indeksikalske status. Endvidere fremviser hans billeder forskellige forsøg på at forme og

udfordre den mandlige identitet på en måde, der selv i dag – mere end et århundrede senere – giver stof til eftertanke

Introduction

This summer Statens Museum for Kunst had an exhibition called *Strindberg - Painter and Photographer.* It showed the world famous writer August Strindberg as a pictorial artist and photographer.
At the same time this summer Nikolaj Udstillingsbygning displayed a showing on some of the photographs by the american artist Cindy Sherman under the title "Cindy Sherman - Moment of Truth".

Now, why mention that? Beside the fact, that Strindberg, obviously, fancied using a camera, and that he - notoriously suffering from megalomania - liked to consider his results as art, there seems to be absolutely no standard of reference between the two. On the one hand we have Johan August Strindberg, born in Sweden 1849, reputed as a passionate misogynist, and on the other Cindy Sherman, born in New Jersey 1954, not willing to accept the term feminist of herself, but nevertheless engaged with issues that border on central disscusions within the feminist movement. Though, in spite of these almost noisy differences, it seems that the similarities between Strindberg and Sherman might be even louder.

Sherman and "staged photography"

In order to develop this thought, I would like to give a short introduction to the concept of "staged photography" - a concept which people over the years have come to associate with younger, american photographers, and especially with Cindy Sherman. "Staged photography" emerged in the 1970's and heralded the fall of the belief in the hitherho unquestioned realism of the camera. What is significant about these photographers is, that they do not *take* their photos, they *create* them. To them the objectivity of the camera is an illusion that they want to expose, and in a highly subjective fashion they create their own fiction in the photo to stress the barrier between reality and photography.

Taking part in the ongoing dissusion about the realtionship between photography and art (a central issue almost from the beginning of photography in 1839) the staging photographers are characterized by two particular standpoints:

(1) their strong resistance to apprehend photography as objective representation of reality, and (2) their interesst in questions on human and sexual identity.

It is more than twenty years since Cindy Sherman made her debut with her "Untitled Film Stills". In these pictures she wanted to show how classical Hollywood films represent women as objects and victims according to one particular gaze - namely the male gaze. Especially in her early work, we witness a kean interest in displaying how Western society produces images of women that are more or less organized in favor of the male gaze. The direction of the female gaze is very important in Sherman's photos. In her continuous play with the female gaze throughout her work, we notice a quite significant development. In the early photos the female gaze is focused on something outside the picture, in some of the later photos the portrayed woman's gaze is marked by a dreamy inward-looking and again directed at something outside the photo. Nevertheless, in many of her later photos the female gaze has become stronger and bolder in a direct confrontration with the gaze of the spectator.

If you take a quick glance at the photograph below, I am sure that you can appreciate the symbolism of the female gaze in this presentation of a woman reminding of a certain woman known to have a deadly gaze, namely Meduza.

A typical 'Sherman-gimmick' is that she is always staging herself as the principal character in her photos. Though other photographers have done the same, people tend to find Sherman's practice rather original. At this time I would like to state, that it may be very original - but with one exception! More

than a hundred years before Sherman *created*, *arranged* and *staged* herself in her photographs, there was one person who did exactly the same. August Strindberg did not 'take' his self-portraits, he 'created' them, and in doing so he asked the same questions on identity as Sherman.

Strindberg - Photographer and Writer

In 1886 Strindberg moves with his family to a pension in the resort of Gersau in Switzerland. With a newly acquired camera he creates a series of portraits of himself and his family. The outcome is the famous "Gersau-photographs". They are the oldest surviving pictures form Strindberg's hand. He took thirty-seven shots, and in twenty-five of the photos Strindberg himself is the principal character in different settings. They are all taken in his home, and the result must be considered very succesfull. His experiments with the self-portrait proved to be rather significant, as he would continue to arrange portraits of himself throughout the rest of his life.

Some time during the autumn of 1886 Strindberg saw one of the first photo interviews with an old colour chemist and it demonstrated to him how photos could bring a text into life. In November, Strindberg sent a publising proposal to Albert Bonnier including eighteen self-portraits accompained by his own captions. In the explanatory letter he writes that the portraits expose the terrible misygonist August Strindberg, and that the pictures are taken by his wife Siri von Essen. The truth is that we know very little about how the photos were made. Some have claimed that Strindberg's referral to his wife as the photographer was a trick on his part in order to achieve a second fee of

Bonniers, whom he owed money. We may conclude that he at times took the pictures himself, while at other times it may have been his wife who released the shutter. In that sense it seems plausible that the "Gersau-suite" is the result of a collaboration between wife and husband, but it seems certain that it was exclusively Strindberg who concentrated on the 'staging' of the pictures.

In the same letter Strindberg stresses that these images are genuine reproductions of reality. The question is what Strindberg means by reality? Does he mean *reality* as opposed to *fiction*? Is he saying that the photos represent him and his family, and that they should be apprehended - not interpreted! - by the spectator as nothing, but well-made documentation on Strindberg's family life?

The "Gersau-suite" is much more than a geniune reproduction of reality. Glancing at these photos, the sepctator immediately senses that they expose a *staging* of reality, not a *reproduction*. I will now move on to talk about the photo of Strindberg as you see below in order to show, that Strindberg's portraits are fiction more than anything else.

Self-portrait of Strindberg

The portrait is the very famous one of Strindberg leaning on the desk with his face in his hands. We know that Strindberg himself set great store by this photograph. We also know that the picture has been subject to quite a few different interpretations. Some emphasize the rather romantic mood because of the foregrounding of the last, white rose of autumn, while others

have seen the photo as being full of despair. An anecdote has it that Edvard Brandes thought it resembled the dread of any writer, when confronted with the emptiness of the white paper. However, the original idea is supposed to have been Siri's, who wanted to take a photo of her husband in order to document his beautiful hair.

What we see is a person leaning his face in his hand on a desk. If one did not know, that the person is Strindberg, we

would probably not be able to tell. We would perhaps ask ourselves: “is it a child or an adult?”, and: “is it a person resting or hiding?”, and perhaps most of all: “is it a man or a woman?”. The androgynous aspect is rather intricate in this picture. Besides all these questions, the overall notion in the spectator is, that this is not a snapshot. The person in the picture - be it a child, an adult, a man or a woman - is *acting* in front of the camera. The person is well-aware of the camera, and is situating him- or herself in a carefully prepared position in order to create a particular situation. As spectators we are forced to interpret the photo, and not just - as with normal portraits - accept the motive without further considerations.

Now why do one get the notion that this photo is not just a normal portrait, but more or less endowed with the characteristics just commented upon in connection with the so-called “staged photography”? What strikes me is the almost overwhelming amount of details in the picture. Nevertheless, it is not the quantity of details, but the way they seem to be *arranged*, which affirms the feeling that this photo is more *fictional* than *realistic*. It could be that Strindberg actually wanted to make a realistic account of his life as an author, but the result is a very fictional rendering of reality. It raises way too many questions. The portrait is a *creation*, a *staging* of a situation, and it challenges an interpretation on behalf of the spectator.

Let us look deeper into the details in the photo. On Strindberg’s left hand we see a bookshelf, a white lamp and a vase with a white rose. It is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the things on his right hand. What is the tiny thing next to his

elbow? And what about the glassy figure, which seems to have a hole in the middle? It is easy to understand why some have identified the portrait with romance, though I think it is more a question of emascualtion. The emascualtion of the author is - among other things - symbolized in the inherent ambiguity of the things surrounding him. The lamp, the vase with the rose, and the glassy figure are all the shape of round and resevoir-like forms, which confer upon them feminine qualities. At the same time, these things are related to vision. We have the white lamp throwing its light on different meanings in the photo, and the white rose and the glassy figure which both possess a rather striking resemblance to the human eye. Could it be that the white rose and the glassy figure represent the eyes of the author that we cannot see?

During the years 1887-88 Strindberg wrote his autobigraphical work *En Dåres Forsvarstale.* He wrote it in french - the original title is *Le plaidoyer d'un fou* (in English something like *The Plea of a fool*) - and it is supossed to be an account on his stormy and nerve-racking marriage to Siri von Essen. In this book he touches upon the same themes, as we witness in many of the Gersau-portraits - namely the question of masculine identity. *En Dåres Forsvarstale* is particular interessting in connection with the "Gersau-photographs", as the relation between the sexes in this book is construed as a fight between the male gaze and the female. Masculinity is, in Strindberg's case, often combined with a focus on the power in the male gaze - or actually most often the lack of power in the male gaze. This 'ocular-crisis' is represented -

one way or the other - in many of his Gersau-portraits, and especially this one.

On several occasions Axl, the narrator and main character, in *En Dåres Forsvarstale* compares himself to the biblical figure of Samson. This comparison may be enligthning to our interpretation of this portrait. As you may remember, the original idea is supposed to have been Siri's, who wanted to portray her husband's impressive hair. If that is true, we are facing an almost incomprehensible sense of irony - or humour!? Could be that Siri wished to immortalize Strindberg's beautiful locks, but the way her husband staged the photograph, the fiction in the portrait perhaps tells us quite another story, namely that of Samson! As you all know Samson lost his heart to a deceitful woman, who cut his hair off, so that he lost his superhuman power and strength, before she handed him over to the Philistines, who tore out his eyes.

Conclusion

All photographs are somehow *staged*. Basically, even the simplest of amateur-photographs is a construction. Nevertheless, Strindberg's "Gersau-suite" is much more than simple-staged photography. The pictures expose the same playful attitude toward the media as with photographers practicing *staged photography* today. Just like Sherman, Strindberg *created, arranged* and *staged* himself in his portraits in a way that accentuated their fictional character at the expense of their realism. And in doing so, he came upon subject matters that still today seem to be important. In the myth of Medusa's deadly gaze, Cindy Sherman

deals with the question of sexual identity. My point is, that Strindberg dealt with the same question in his "Gersau-photographs". Perhaps he is telling the story of Samson in this portrait, perhaps he is not. Anyway, it seems that this particular portrait is more a depiction of a writer's emasculation, than of a writer's block. In this portrait, I believe that Strindberg shows us the vulnerability of the male gaze.

In her "Untitled Film Stills" Sherman deals with female identity and exposes the way women tend to become victims and objects in our mordern society. A hundred years earlier, Strindberg described the same conflict in his "Gersau-photographs" - only then, the *man* was the object and the victim!

CV:

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Thomas Markussen:

Charging Narrative Identity. Some Aspects of the first Section of William Faulkner's 'The Sound and the Fury'

Abstract:

It has been widely acknowledged that the modern novel made what has been termed an 'inward turn' in the literary history. Turning from a concern of external affairs the modern novelist thus started positing radical questions of some of the mysteries surrounding the human mind, which had immediate representationel consequences. Plot dissolvement, interior monologue, aesthetic sollipsism are just some of the symptoms of this movement. From a cognito-semiotic point of departure this paper tries to explain what was then the new conditions of the narrative experience in the Benjy-section of William Faulkner's "The Sound and the Fury".

Resumé:

Det er alment anerkendt, at den modernistiske roman foretog, hvad man har kaldt, en 'en introvert vending' i litteraturhistorien. Idet den moderne romanforfatter vendte sig væk fra en opmærksomhed på ydre forhold, begyndte han at stille radikale spørgsmål til de mysterier, der omgiver den menneskelige bevidsthed, hvilket havde øjeblikkelige

repræsentationelle konsekvenser. Opløsning af plottet, indre monolog, æstetisk solipsisme er blot nogle af symptomerne på denne bevægelse. Fra et kognitivt-semiotisk udgangspunkt forsøger dette essay at gøre rede for, hvad der da var de nye betingelser for narrativ erfaring i Benjy-delen i Wiliam Faulkner's 'The Sound and the Fury'.

Introduction

It is today a commonplace that the stream of consciousness novel at the turn of the last century provided us with some radical new ideas about human and personal identity. Nevertheless, a full appreciation of the wide range of these ideas is totally dependent on an awareness of the specific relationship between language and the (sub-)human consciousness that underlies the aesthetics of this genre. Before we shall undertake a short journey down the spell-binding stream of consciousness that we find in the first section of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), I would like to make an attempt to increase our awareness of this relationship. Or rather, taking into account the consequences of reading strategies that base themselves either on the linguistic turn or on a postsymbolistic distrust of language's ability to mediate the originary human consciousness, it is my purpose to mark out a third way to enter the stream of consciousness novel.

Since this way in itself is connected both with phenomenology, cognitive science and semiotics, it is actually difficult to come up with an appropriate name for it. Nevertheless, in what follows I have chosen to call it 'the inward turn' being fully aware that I thereby run the risk of being identified with a literary tradition that regards the mode of

representation in the stream of consciousness novel as an equivalent respond to the introspective and intuitive psychology of William James and Henri Bergson. But unlike these critics, who believe that the constitutive layers of consciousness must be founded on some inexpressible region of the human mind (cf. Friedman 1955; Edel 1955), I consider the very emergence of consciousness to be inseparably connected with a *transcendental semiotic principle* that is at work *always already* on a inchoate perceptual level and which Peirce and Cassirer were among the first to notice. So, while it is of course possible to talk of a preverbal cognitive level, it would be misleading to make assumptions of a *presemiotic* level of consciousness – at least not one worth mentioning.

Another reason for maintaining to designate the course between the linguistic turn and intuitionism as 'inward turn' stem from my firm believe that it is exactly through the exploitation of such metaphors that we will be able to describe that specific concern of the stream of consciousness novel (and thereby also of the reading process) which has up to now evaded those within the current of literary semiotics who posit themselves under the yoke of structuralism or rather *structural semiology*. Thus, by means of a deliberate metaphorizing of the human mind as a container, the phrase 'the inward turn' not only lends us a concretizing power to express that profound interest in what goes on "deep inside" our conscious lives which the modern novel, in fact, shares with the recent developments within cognitive science; it should also serve to indicate that in contrast to some less dearing literary semioticians as for example Greimas (1966;

1970), we are prepared to stick our nose into the so-called black box as long as it happens through the semiotico-hermeneutico detour of symbolic forms. However, to understand the exploded symbolic form (Mellard 1980) of the modern novel and the new ideas of human identity that it reflected, we must first zoom in on the relevant contextual frame.

1. Contextual Zoom In

It is widely acknowledged that at the beginning of the twentieth century there arise an urgent need to charge the notion of human identity, because of some major changes within science, philosophy and literature. Thus, in the wake of modern physics Einstein and Bohr both show that the conditions of our knowledge about the world cannot be based on notions of absolute space and time as was the case with Newtonian physics. Instead these conditions must be defined in relation to the given situation of the observer and the instruments involved in the experimental observation.

Similar to this *relativistic tendency* in modern physics, we find a reluctance in contemporary philosophy to accept the positivism that haunts the sciences of the late nineteenth century, when Bergson and Husserl are trying to found their epistemologies on the constitution of the experiencing ego.

This reckoning with absolute objectivism in physics and philosophy is – as we know – reflected in the decline of the realistic and naturalistic novel at the turn of the century. Left with the conclusions of Einstein's general theory of relativity, of Bohr's theory of complementarity, and of the intense subjectivity of

idealist philosophy, the writers of narrative fiction gradually start to question the possibility of acquiring objective knowledge about the external world. And this epistemological problem is necessarily entangled in an aesthetic problem. Because, when *metaphysical realism* is revealed as a positivistic illusion, it becomes fairly impossible to keep a believe in the mimetic notion of a 1:1 correspondence between language and the outside world, which underlies the realistic and naturalistic modes of representation. Simultaneously to the rise of the epistemological problem, then, the novel is thrown into a representational crisis.

The development of the modern novel is very much to be regarded as an endeavour to resolve this crisis. What happens is that the writers of narrative fiction attempt to come up with a solution by deriving firm aesthetic principles from the human mind. Since according to the current way of thinking, the recognition of the outside world must always be seen as dependent on the experiencing subject, this so called "inward turn" (Kahler 1973) on human consciousness taken in the modern novel seems a perfectly natural movement. But unlike Bergson who approached the fundamental layers of subjective experience with his *intuitiv method* and Husserl who was making inquiries into the *originary intentional structure* of human consciousness by way of the *eidetic reduction* (i.e. the well-known bracketing method), the modern novel were not in possession of a tried out method, which could provide the relevant answers to the questions about the epistemological principles underlying the narrative experience. As a consequence, the authors started to make experiments in order to find out in what way the basic

mechanisms involved in the conceptual system of the human mind may be revealed.

Out of the many and often radical experiments, which are being made in the modern novel (especially in the novels by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner), there appears to be one method in particular that proves to be extremely useful, when it comes to fulfil the widespread interest in penetrating the dark mysteries of the human mind. That is, of course, the method that goes by the name of the *stream-of-consciousness method* within the literary discipline and which consists in an attempt to show how the content of the mind is being organized.

The appearance of the stream-of-consciousness method of representation signifies a major change in the conception of narrative identity. Instead of regarding identity as being founded on a specific social class as in Balzac or as a depraved result of an inflamed relationship between heredity and environment as the naturalists have it, the modern writers assume identity to originate in *a certain unifying mechanism involved in the subjective experience*. The primary question being of course what this unifying mechanism in itself consists of and what it is conditioned by.

Having been developed to provide an answer to this question, by describing how our experience must be structured on the most fundamental level of our conceptual system, the stream-of-consciousness method is based on some assumption about the relationship between language and the human mind, which will be crucial for my following reading of *The Sound and the Fury*. Let us, therefore, attempt to pin down this assumption.

2. The stream-of-consciousness method

According to Robert Humphrey's still useful book on the theme, what distinguishes the stream-of-consciousness mode of representation from all other narrative techniques is, »that it is concerned with those levels [of consciousness] that are more inchoate than rational verbalization – those levels on the margin of attention.«[7]

Apparently, Humphrey's description of the stream-of-consciousness technique confronts us with a paradox: How can some layers of consciousness more inchoate than rational verbalization be approached by a mode of representing through language? Nevertheless, if we are careful not to identify the *inward turn* taken in the development of the stream-of-consciousness method with that of the *linguistic turn* taken in and with analytic philosophy, this paradox may be explained away.

According to the analytic philosophy underlying the linguistic turn, the basic laws of thought must be derived from the phenomenon of linguistic representation, which means that an »epistemological inquiry ... is to be answered by a linguistic investigation.«[8] Now, making linguistic representation the primary point of departure of a basic epistemological inquiry will necessarily exclude those layers of consciousness that is not yet expressible through language from playing any particular significant role in the constitution of knowledge, truth, and

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[7] Humphrey (1954) *Stream of Consciousness and the Modern Novel*, pp. 2-3, my applications.

[8] Cf. Dummett (1993) *The Origins of Analytical Philosophy*, p. 5.

meaning (cf. Johnson 1987). Indeed, since according to the linguistic turn the only thing that guaranties objective knowledge is the disposition of being linguistically expressible, what may be involved in forming pre-verbal experiences is condemned to the utterly impenetrable darkness of privacy.

Surely, when seen from such a perspective, the attempt that are being made in the stream-of-consciousness novel to analyze what is not yet language through language must look like pure nonsense from the very beginning. But the assumption underlying the stream-of-consciousness mode of representation is quite the opposite to the one that make up the linguistic turn, since it regards the laws that structure the articulation of language as being founded precisely on some constitutive operations that is at work already on a pre-verbal level of the human mind. In fact, the stream-of-consciousness "philosophy" may be defined exactly *as the believe in the possibility of gaining insight in this constitutive, yet pre-verbal area of our conceptual system by pushing linguistic representation to its limits*.

But is this believe not identical to the mysticism of intuitive psychology? If the stream of consciousness novelists wanted to invent a literary style which could provide us with a vision of our innermost selves that was unaffected by any kind of symbols then yes. However, in the later decades of literary criticism there has emerge an increasing acknowledgement of the circumstance that these novelist were perhaps among the first to recognize how thoroughly signification in general seems to pervade every aspect of the human condition. So, instead of regarding the stream of consciousness mode of representation as concerned with an

inexpressible layer of the human mind it would be more accurate to perceive it as a sparkling way to call attention to an aspect of our existence which conventional language and syntax were at that time unable to express.

Now, let us see what the stream-of-consciousness mode of representation reveals about the human condition as it is realized in the Benjy-section of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*.

3. Some Aspects of the first Section of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*

Taking our version of the "inward turn" into *The Sound and the Fury* instead of the "linguistic turn" and the mystical turn of introspective psychology is crucial, when it comes to understand the aesthetic principles of a tale, which consists in the flow of the chaotic sensations and memories that comes to the mind of a nearly thirty-three-year-old dumb fool, as he is guided around his family residence by a Negro slave belonging to the household. Of course, we cannot just ignore the fact that what Benjy experiences, while Luster is looking for his lost quarter, is given to us through language. But taking the inward turn we are licensed to draw inferences from this language to whatever may be or may not be the *unifying mechanism in Benjy's experience* without restricting our inquiry in advance to the *proposition*, which should be the basic mental operation according to analytic philosophy.

Thus, when we become aware that neither *conjunctions* nor *conjunctive adverbs* do appear in Benjy's discourse, we are allowed to draw the conclusion that Benjy is not able to establish *logical* connections between his sensations and the memories of his lost

sister, Caddy, which those sensations lead to. In order words: Benjy does not possess the *faculty of abstracting*.

In a similar way, when we realize that all events, no matter whether actually happening sensations or past memories, are conveyed by the same past tense, we can conclude that Benjy is represented as being incapable of structuring his experiences according to the a past-present-future orientation. You could say that *time is all one for him* or that it does not even exist.«[9]

As it ignores both the *logical* and *temporal* way of combining events, Benjy's story puts traditional narratology in a sticky situation. Thus, we can ascertain that what is at work in Benjy's narrative configuration is a frustrating kind of judgmental activity that cannot be adequately described according to *the organizing syntagmatic principle of the sentence*, which has played a more or less exclusive role as regards the elaboration of a universal narrative structure inside Structuralist poetics.

Neither does the fabula/sujet analysis, developed by Russian Formalism, provide us with any tenable solution, because it is founded on a scientific notion of objective time, which is in radical conflict with the epistemology underlying the perspectivism of the Benjy-section. Even if it has helped readers and critics to reconstruct a momentary survey of how the events of Benjy's story must have happened according to so called normal chronology, the fabula/sujet analysis applies temporality

[9] Kaluza (1967) *The Functioning of Sentence Structure in the Stream-of-consciousness Technique of William Faulkner's* The Sound and the Fury, p. 49. Cf. Pouillon (1946) *Temps et Destinée chez Faulkner*.

to an experiential order, where this organizing principle is simply absent.

Facing the theoretical void of traditional narratology must not lead us to believe that there exists no unifying mechanism in Benjy's experience though. For, if we take a closer look at the first scene change in the section, there appears to be at least one thing that makes his sensation and memory cohere – and that is the position of Benjy's body. As he and Luster are walking along the fence that is adjacent to the golf course, the scene shift is experienced by Benjy as follows:

> »We went along the fence and came to the garden fence, where our shadows were ... We came to the broken place and went through it.
> 'Wait a minute.' Luster said. 'You snagged on that nail again. Can't you never crawl through here without snagging on that nail.'
> *Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through.*«[10]

What we witness here in this passage is, that the experience of being snagged on a nail makes Benjy relive an episode with his sister Caddy, that he experienced on exactly the same place some twenty-four years back in time on a cold December day. I say precisely 'relive' instead of 'remember'. Because, since Benjy is not able to differentiate in time, it is actually wrong to attribute the faculty of *memory* to his conceptual system.

[10] Faulkner (1929) *The Sound and the Fury,* p. 2.

Instead of being remembered, the slip from the experience of being snagged on a nail – having Luster scolding him – to the experience of being released by Caddy some twenty-four years earlier is motivated by what Olga Vickery has appropriately called a '*mechanical identification*'[11]. Contrary to a memory, which must based on a certain *relationship* between difference and resemblance, the mechanical identification is defined precisely as an illusory operation that generates »the exact replica of the incident« in question.[12] So, when Benjy feels himself being caught on the fence it releases a mechanical identification, which superimposes present and past experiences in such an intimate manner, that he cannot tell the difference.

What Benjy's experience reveals to us, then, is that the mechanical identification is inseparably anchored to his *bodily position*, and to the way his body is perceptually interacting with the immediate environment. But is it possible to extend this point of a single observation to the rest of the Benjy-section? I will say it is. As a host of careful readings of the Benjy-section already have revealed, the motivation of the different changes of scenes is deeply rooted in Benjy's bodily movement as he walks around the family residence. This means that time will be subordinated to space, or rather *place* (cf. Casey 1997), as regards the organizing principle of combining the events.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

4. Conclusion

The exposure of the body as being, not only the primary *narratological* but also *epistemological* principle in the Benjy-section of *The Sound and the Fury*, is in striking agreement with some recent developments inside cognitive science as may be seen, for example, in Lakoff & Johnsons *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999). Being largely inspired by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Lakoff & Johnson uses the concept of 'flesh' as well as the concept of 'the embodied mind' to give an account of that intimate bond, where our bodies meet the surrounding world.

In Merleau-Ponty the flesh is, as we know, characterized by being of a double nature: On the one hand, it roots the body so deeply into the world that it is impossible to tell, where our bodies end, and where the world begin. But at the same time, the flesh possesses a simple ability to interpret itself, thereby showing signs of mind activity on a very rudimentary level. It is this double nature, then, that Lakoff & Johnson take into account by their more appropriate renaming of 'the embodied mind'.

The self reflection of the embodied mind may, for example, reveal itself as a mutual interaction between the tactile and the visual area of the perceptual system. We are talking of a *synaesthetic* form of experience or a joining of sensations, which are normally distinguished as belonging to separate perceptual areas.

Returning briefly to the novel we may identify this self-interpreting process in the episode, where Benjy is sitting in a corner holding on to his slipper. In Benjy's mind the episode proceeds as follows:

»[...] In the corner it was dark, but I could see the window. I squatted there, holding the slipper. I couldn't see it, but my hands saw it, and I could hear it getting night, and my hands saw the slipper but I couldn't see myself, but my hands could see the slipper and I squatted there, hearing it getting dark.«[13]

In this repetitive stream-of-consciousness we witness a primordial process of reflexivity, i.e., a process in which the individual senses do not work separately, but interact or rather *represent* each other on behalf of that unity which is our body. So, the hands and ears represent the eyes as Benjy is sitting in that dark corner. This synaesthetic experience, then, points to a fundamental *semiotic principle* in the perceptual constitution of Benjy's body, which may be taken as the germ of the representative function of thought.

Even though the embodied mind, as it is revealed in the Benjy-section, constitutes a first step towards rational thinking, we cannot speak of anything like an ego or a cogito as yet. Rather, on this basic level there exist *always already* (to use a phenomenological term) a unity between the body and the world, before any distinction between a subject and an object can be made.

In the novel this absence of a rational ego is reflected by Benjy's inability to sense himself as the focus of his own experience, as well as by his inability to distinguish between external objects and his own actions and perceptions.[14] For

[13] Faulkner op. cit., pp. 61-62.

[14] Cf. Kaluza op. cit., p. 58.

example, after he has just burned himself in Dilsey's kitchen, Benjy experiences his own hand as something external to him as »it is trying to go back into his mouth.« Another feature of the discourse that also represents Benjy as being unconscious of himself as agent or receiver of his own physical experience is the use of the same verb with both animate and inanimate nouns, such as »the barn came back« or »the light came tumbling down the steps«.[15] Turning the relationship between agent and object upside down, thus reflect that the constitution of an ego has not yet taken place in Benjy's experience.

As we have read through this astonishing tale that is registered by a person, who does not possess the faculty of speech, we have recognized bit by bit that what is revealed here does not confine itself to a mental deficiency. On the contrary, as we witnessed the profound confusion of the subjective and the objective we got an embodied-mind experience, whereby we gained an ambiguous insight into, who we really are.

So, we may conclude that by way of charging narrative identity with the stream-of-consciousness method, Faulkner succeeded in revealing the embodied mind as a foundation of universal validity (since we all share this condition), which may provide some answers not only to the question of what constitutes human identity, but also to some basic problems concerning the organizing principles involved in the narrative configuration. It would therefore be interesting in the future, if literary criticism took up the discussion about how and if the notion of the

[15] Ibid., p. 56.

embodied mind could be accommodated to the existing narratology.

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