

NORWAY'S SURPRISE FIRST POSTMODERN NOVEL:
EDVARD HOEM'S *KJÆRLEIKENS FERJEREISER* (1974)

Hoem's text was acclaimed throughout Norway following its 1974 release and has garnered considerable attention from academics since then. Despite this, the text's postmodernism has gone entirely unrecognized and undiscussed in Norway. *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* is postmodern because it juxtaposes two dissimilar frames of reference, breaks its own narrative frames, foregrounds the meeting of fact and fiction, blends popular and high culture, revisits history, revises tradition, and emphasizes ontological over epistemological issues. Before discussing how each of these individual facets contribute to the text's postmodernism, a brief survey of the extant scholarship on Hoem's text will show that, while Norwegian scholars have not used the term "postmodern" per se, many of them have identified specific postmodern features and have searched for a word that would describe them. This chapter provides them with the word they have been searching for: Hoem's text is postmodern.

BACKGROUND

All of the extensive scholarship on *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* discusses either its social/political issues or its narrative form and often both. Academics have used a host of various terms to classify the text, including *distriktsroman* [district novel], socialist realism, epic, Brechtian, collective novel, and metafiction. Part of the problem in classifying it is that it is all of these. Only two people have classified it as postmodern, Frankie Denton Shackelford, who translated the text into English, and myself, both of us Americans. Ironically, while Norwegian scholars have not used the word "postmodern," many have in fact identified a number of the text's key postmodern aspects.

Kjærleikens ferjereiser triggered quite a bit of discussion upon its release in 1974. The book was nominated for the Nordic Council's literature prize, and less than a year after the first edition, a school version edited by Idar Stegane was released. The book inspired a flurry of academic papers in the 1970s and then another wave in the 1990s. Typically, the early scholarship addresses both the text's political and structural aspects, including postmodern features such as the focus on ontological concerns, the combination of theory and fiction, double coding, and the desire to find a new literary form suited to contemporary society. The early commentaries stop just short of using terms like postmodern, ontology, and double coding, but explicitly highlight these aspects of Hoem's text. Oddly, the later scholarship is sharply divided between those who classify the text as purely socialist realism and those who classify it as postmodern.

THE EARLY SCHOLARSHIP

In one of the earliest contributions, Øystein Tjora (1976) finds the combination of realism and alienation that most subsequent scholars have identified, noting the text's connection on the one hand to,

en tradisjonell realisme som ser litteraturen som avspeiling og søker å framstille det typiske i en form som umiddelbart kan gjenkjennes i det virkelige liv. På den annen side er det trekk som knytter romanen til en Brecht-tradisjon som søker å være anskuelig og framstiller virkeligheten i en slik form at den oppleves som fremmed (99).

[a traditional realism that sees literature as a reflection and seeks to present what is typical in a form that can be immediately recognized in real life. On the other hand there are features that connect the novel to a Brechtian tradition that seeks to be clear and presents reality in such a form that it is experienced as alien.]

At the same time, however, Tjora also recognizes the text's postmodern transcendence of ontological boundaries. He writes,

På samme måte som Fantomet bryter seg ut av sine murer, løser romanpersonene seg ut av sin veldefinerte plass som fiktive romanfigurer. En mening med å viske ut grensene mellom virkelig og uvirkelig kan ha vært å rykke virkeligheten nærmere inn på leseren og ikke la han kjenne seg for sikker på hva som er virkelighet. Men det kan også virke som om det er et lite moment av magi med i spillet, når forfatteren lar ting skje i den uvirkelige verden for at det skal skje i den virkelige (98).

[The same way that the Phantom breaks out of his walls, the characters in the novel free themselves from their well defined positions as fictional characters in a novel. One reason for erasing the borders between real and fictional may have been to pull reality closer to the reader and not let him be overly certain about what is real. But it may also act as a small element of magic in the game, when the author lets things happen in the fictional world so that they will happen in the real one.]

Here Tjora alludes to Hoem's use of the comic book character of the Phantom in the text. The comic book is a low culture genre and by noting this specific element of Hoem's text, Tjora is touching on one of the text's prominent postmodernist features, its mixture of high and low culture references. In addition, Tjora draws attention to the characters transcending their ontological state, freeing themselves from their fictional state. In fact, Tjora describes the ontological flicker that permeates *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*, where the text constantly alternates between layers of reality and fiction, foregrounding ontological issues in the text. To be sure, Tjora has his finger on the text's postmodernism; he simply does not use the word.

Also writing in 1976, Olav Torfinn Jondahl calls the book a collective novel (93), but also points out that the book contains "to forteljarar, boka er ein 'dobbelfiksjon'" [two narrators, the book is a "double fiction"] (106). Recognizing the dual aspects of Hoem's text, Jondahl unknowingly taps into what the following year Charles Jencks would call "double coding," one of the primary strategies employed by postmodernist architects (12). In this respect, Hoem's text bears a remarkable similarity to Kjærstad's *Homo falsus*, now widely acknowledged as postmodernist; both texts are double fictions.

Jondahl also cites Martin Nag's comment in *Bergens Tidende* that *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* "er faktisk et originalt bidrag til moderne romans teori: ...Vi er vitne til et lykketreff: En Brecht-impuls får et

nedslag—ikke førti år ‘forsinket’, men i rette tid!” [is actually an original contribution to modern novel theory: ...We are witness to a stroke of luck: A Brechtian impulse hits the mark—not forty years ‘late,’ but right on time!] (qtd. in Jondahl 96). By picking up on this specific aspect of Hoem’s text, both Nag and Jondahl are hovering around one of the text’s clearest postmodern traits, its combination of literary theory with literature. A decade later, Hutcheon acknowledges this hybridizing border tension between the literary and theoretical, “where the borders are kept clear, even if they are frequently crossed” as typically postmodern (37). The works of other postmodernist authors such as H  l  ne Cixous and Umberto Eco also demonstrate this fusion of theory and literature.

In attempting to ultimately classify the text’s genre, Jondahl writes, “eg meiner at KF... er prega av genreblanding; sj  lv om boka er ein roman, er ho ikkje rein epikk” [I believe that *Kj  rleikens ferjereiser*... is characterized by its mix of genres; even if the book is a novel, it is not a pure epic] (109). Here he gets to the heart of literary historians’ problem in categorizing Hoem’s text. *Kj  rleikens ferjereiser* is a hybridization of several different genres. Anyone looking for a single “pure” genre will be thwarted. Jondahl discusses Hoem’s use of cinematographic, theatrical, and poetic techniques, and concludes that book has “ei episk ramme. Innanfor denne episke ramma gjev Hoem plass til filmatiske og lyriske innskot, men den episke ramma held boka saman” [an epic frame. Inside this epic frame, Hoem makes room for cinematographic and lyrical interpolations, but the epic frame holds the book together] (114). While this differs from Tjora’s categorization of the text as part realist and part Brechtian, Jondahl’s classification is equally valid.

Writing the following year, Sverre Tusvik comes up with yet another genre. He calls *Kj  rleikens ferjereiser* a collective novel, but adds:

...den forteljetekniske ramma som er lagt kring hendingane i   ykommunen, kan ikkje berre forklarast og legitimerast som brechtske “verfremdungsknep.” Slik som denne teknikken her er variert kan han ogs   tolkast som uttrykk for ei diktarholdning som ligg f  rleg n  r det kunstsynet som r  dde i romantikken... (209)

[...technically the narrative frame that surrounds the events in the island municipality cannot just be explained and legitimated as Brechtian *Verfremdung* tricks. The way this technique is varied here, it can also be interpreted as expressing an authorial attitude that lies dangerously close to the view of art that prevailed during romanticism...]

Tusvik’s comparison to “romanticism” is rather a stretch, but he does put his finger on something important. Hoem expresses an authorial attitude that is not consistent with other collective novels, let alone realism. Postmodernism better describes this new authorial attitude. Interestingly, Tusvik acknowledges that Hoem’s use of “han som skriv” is more than an alienation effect, suggesting that it is more similar to the Romantics’ idea of the author as God. And Tusvik is correct of course, that along with everything else *Kj  rleikens ferjereiser* is also a collective novel.

Also writing in 1977, Siri Ramsdal comes closest to recognizing Hoem’s text as postmodern. While Tusvik continued to look back towards Brecht, realism, and romanticism to find something to

compare Hoem's style with, Ramsdal has the foresight to recognize Hoem's technique as something new. She concludes that Hoem's book is a(n) "forsøk på å skape noe nytt, en ny form som er tilpasset den tid og det samfunn vi har idag, men også det nivå som venstrebevegelsen generelt befinner seg på" [attempt to create something new, a new form that is suited to the time and the society we have today, but also the level that the leftist movement finds itself in generally] (82). This new form she describes but does not name is postmodernism.

So, each of these four early scholars assigned the text to a different genre, but realized that their classification did not quite describe what Hoem has done. As a group, Tjora, Jondahl, Tusvik, and Ramsdal correctly identify *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* as a hybridization of realism, epic, collective novel, and something new. They circle around the text's postmodernism, noting its focus on ontological concerns, its combination of theory and fiction, and its double coding. Tjora likens it to the Phantom and Ramsdal concludes that it demonstrates the desire to find a new literary form suited to contemporary society. In retrospect, it is clear that the word they were all searching for is "postmodern."

LATE 20TH CENTURY SCHOLARSHIP

After the 1970s, the quantity of academic work on *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* declined and a schism developed in the text's classification. Since 1990, Hoem's text has generally been categorized as socialist realism. Two scholars, however, have classified it as postmodernism. Over the course of the rest of this chapter, I show why the text is postmodernist. In this section, I will briefly summarize why it is also socialist realist.

In 1996, Aamotsbakken concludes that "*Kjærleikens ferjereiser* kan uten videre kategoriseres som en sosialrealistisk roman, da teksten skildrer utvikling og tendenser i 1970-årenes bygde-Norge" [*Kjærleikens ferjereiser* can be categorized as a socialist realist novel without further ado, since the text portrays development and trends in 1970s rural Norway] (5). Despite this, she acknowledges that Hoem displays an unusual curiosity towards language and textual composition, "som ikke er vanlig for tekster innenfor sosialrealisme" [which is not customary for texts within socialist realism] (5). Aamotsbakken's conclusion is representative of most late twentieth century views on the novel (cf. Hadle Andersen, Mork and Linneberg 56–57, et al.).

These scholars are by no means wrong; the text refers to innumerable social and political issues, everything from abortion to Norwegian Maoism. Hoem has been exceedingly outspoken in his personal life and in much of his other fiction on his political views, helping to fuel this perspective on his fiction. He was an avowed Marxist-Leninist and Maoist when the novel was released in 1974, and vociferously campaigned against Norway joining the E.E.C. in 1972 and the E.U. in 1994.

Kjærleikens ferjereiser indisputably foregrounds political issues as a major theme, from Metta Nilsen's activism in distributing the *Klassekampen* newspaper to the inclusion of a newspaper headline that reads, "Proletarer i alle land, foren dere. EEC—en imperialistisk trusel mot Norge" (113) [Workers of the

world, unite! EEC—an imperialist threat to Norway] (105). Clearly politics and social realism comprise elements of Hoem's text worthy of discussion, however focusing solely on these issues has distracted scholars from acknowledging other aspects of his work. Indeed, the Norwegian reading public had preconceived expectations for the political contents of Hoem's novel before it was even released, in part distracting them from making an unbiased assessment of the text. Based on his pro-Marxist novel *Anna Lena* (1971) and anti-capitalist play *Kvinnene langs fjorden* [*The Women Along the Fjord*] (1973), Norwegians anticipated a strong leftist political message.

Hoem did not disappoint them. However, *Kjarleikens ferjereiser* contributes more to Norwegian literary history than its author's political opinions. In describing the reception Hoem received for the text, Rottem writes:

Selv om det politiske budskapet kommer klart til uttrykk, er ikke *Kjarleikens ferjereiser* et propagandistisk verk. Det kan være en av årsakene til at det fikk gjennomgående positiv kritikk, uavhengig av anmeldernes politiske ståsted. At det ble nominert til Nordisk Råds litteraturpris og ble delt Kritikerprisen, turde i alle fall være et tegn på at «AKP-litteraturen» ikke bare ble motarbeidet. At Hoem måtte tåle hard kritikk fra sine egne, tyder på at takhøyden var lavere hos de som beskyldte andre for å motarbeide dem" (357).

[Even if the political message is clearly expressed, *Kjarleikens ferjereiser* is not a work of propaganda. This may be one of the reasons that it received generally positive reviews, regardless of the reviewers' political stance. That it was nominated for the Nordic Council's literature prize and was awarded the Critics' Prize should in any case be a sign that people did not just work against "Workers' Communist Party literature." That Hoem had to endure harsh criticism from his own people suggests that the threshold was lower among those who were accusing others of working against them.]

Rottem recognizes the novel's political message, but not to the exclusion of its other aspects. Hoem's text clearly involves a great deal of socialist realism. Nonetheless, it is more than that. The author's politics and *Kjarleikens ferjereiser*'s political messages are one of the major reasons Norwegian scholars and literary historians have not recognized the text's postmodernism. I predict the novel will eventually be recorded in literary histories for what it is, a combination of socialist realism and postmodernism.

UNLIKELY BED PARTNERS: SOCIALIST REALISM AND POSTMODERNISM

Hoem overlays two dissimilar frames of reference in *Kjarleikens ferjereiser*, social realism, which Norwegian Marxist-Leninists were quite preoccupied with in the 1970s, and postmodernism, which started to become popular in global literature in the 1960s and 1970s. This combination is highly unusual. For good reason, many people have viewed the two as mutually incompatible. In *Postmodernism och metafiktion i Norden*, for example, Jansson writes:

Postmodernismens värld är starkt pragmatisk inriktad och politiskt sett på en och samma gång anarkistisk och individualistisk och samtidigt också tendentiellt konservativ eller åtminstone tydligt anti-kollektivistisk och anti-socialistisk (7).

[Postmodernism's world has a strong pragmatic focus and seen in political terms is at once

anarchic and individualistic and at the same time also purposefully conservative or at the very least clearly anti-collective and anti-socialist.]

As a general rule, this proves true. But if it were always true, Hoem's essentially collective, socialist novel about rural Romsdal could not possibly be postmodern. Certainly most Norwegian Marxist-Leninist authors—such as Dag Solstad, Espen Haavardsholm, Tor Obrestad, and even Edvard Hoem—were writing socialist literature in the 1970s that was not at all postmodernist. But the generalization that all texts from the seventies or that all Norwegian *ml-litteratur* [Marxist-Leninist literature] by definition cannot be postmodern overlooks this important exception. *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* (1974), arguably the premier example of Norwegian *70-talslitteratur* [seventies literature], is both social realism and postmodernism.

In stating this, I am contradicting a widely held belief that the break—or, as Linneberg and Mork call it in their poorly translated article, the “crack-up”—between social realism and postmodernism happened around 1980 in Norway (57). I contend instead that this fault line runs directly through the middle of *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* (1974), with one part of the text clearly on the side of social realism and the other part clearly on the side of postmodernism. The fact that a text can be simultaneously social realist and postmodernist not only demonstrates the diversity and richness of postmodernism as a literary movement, it also points to an important change that will soon be reflected in Norwegian literary studies. The categories of “seventies” and “eighties” literature will fade away in favor of more descriptive delineations that will include postmodernism.

Late twentieth century Norwegian literary historians have been dividing authors into groupings by decade as they waited for new patterns and movements to become apparent and for more sensible groupings to emerge. This dissertation demonstrates the need for this next step in literary historicism. For, indeed, I demonstrate that *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*, the preeminent representative of Norwegian *70-talslitteratur* [seventies literature], and *Homo falsus*, the preeminent representative of Norwegian *80-talslitteratur* [eighties literature], are both postmodernist texts. Norwegian literary histories will soon give up the decade designations in favor of delineations that can more readily deal with the similarities between Hoem's and Kjærstad's texts.

THE LONE RANGER AND TONTO FIST FIGHT IN HEAVEN: DEBUNKING DECADE DESIGNATIONS IN NORWEGIAN LITERARY HISTORY

There are a number of reasons why dividing Norwegian literature into seventies and eighties periods is misleading. Born four years apart Hoem, the prototypical seventies author, and Kjærstad, the prototypical eighties author, do not actually belong to different chronological generations. Both authors continue to write, long after their debuts, Hoem in 1969 with *Som grønne musikantar* [*Like Green Musicians*] and Kjærstad in 1980 with *Kloden dreier seg stille rundt* [*The Planet Quietly Revolves*]. Their styles and interests have changed a great deal over the decades and yet they are still caricaturized as 70s and 80s authors respectively.

In his *Syn og Segn* article on *90-talslitteraturen* [nineties literature], for example, Hadle Oftedal Andersen sets Hoem and Kjørstad in opposition to each other, each representative of their decadedelineated literary period:

På 70-talet blei denne interessa for røyndomen radikalisert, til ein tydeleg kommuniserande og venstrepolitisk engasjert sosialrealisme (t.d. Hoems *Kjørleikens ferjereiser* frå 1974, den enkle ‘brukslyrikken’). Og på 80-talet slo litteraturen kontra, til undersøkingar av den postmoderne tilstanden. Her er relevante stikkord mellom anna ideologisk bortfall, nedbryting av den kronologiske historia og opplevinga av at røyndomen er fiksjonalisert (Kjørstads modellorienterte romanar, Ulvens lyrikk, o.a.).

[In the 1970s, this interest in reality was radicalized into a clearly communicative and leftist politically engaged social realism (e.g. Hoem’s *Kjørleikens ferjereiser* from 1974, the simple ‘*Gebrauchslyrik*’ [utilitarian lyric poetry]). And in the 1980s, literature struck back, towards examinations of the postmodern condition. Here the relevant key words include the disappearance of ideologies, the breakdown of the chronological story, and the experience of reality being fictionalized (Kjørstad’s model-oriented novels, Ulven’s lyric poetry, et al.).]

Andersen reflects a point of view that has been the standard in Norway, particularly during the 1990s, but in hindsight proves inadequate. First of all, like so many others, Andersen uses Hoem and Kjørstad as stereotypical examples of Norwegian seventies and eighties literature without addressing the fact that both authors are very much at the heart of Norwegian nineties literature, the topic of Andersen’s article. In fact, Kjørstad went on to win one of the most prestigious literary prizes in the Nordic countries, the Nordic Council’s literature prize, for his 1999 book *Oppdageren* [*The Discoverer*]. What sense is there in making Kjørstad the poster child of Norwegian eighties literature when he is also one of the most acclaimed and widely read Norwegian authors of the nineties?

If the terms “seventies” or “eighties literature” were adequate to describe what was going on in Norwegian literature during those years, then the system would also accommodate female authors, suspiciously absent from most discussions of seventies and eighties authors. This would mean that Cecilie Løveid’s *Sug* (1979) would be emblematic of seventies literature. It is not. *Sug* is postmodernist. In some senses, of course, Andersen is right in saying that *Kjørleikens ferjereiser* is leftist, politically engaged socialist realism, but he is incorrect in calling it “clearly communicative” or “simply utilitarian.” In fact, more so even than Kjørstad’s *Homo falsus*, *Kjørleikens ferjereiser* depicts the “experience of reality being fictionalized.” When it comes right down to it, *Homo falsus* sooner does the opposite, depicting the experience of *fiction* being *realized* as Greta’s character transcends her role as a fictional character to become a real person. The decade classifications are completely insufficient to deal with *Kjørleikens ferjereiser*, *Sug*, and *Homo falsus*. All three texts are representative of the skill and diversity of Norwegian postmodernism and should be categorized as such.

My suggestion is not completely unprecedented. All three of these authors—Hoem, Løveid, and Kjørstad—have at times been mentioned in the context of postmodernism. Jansson describes *Homo falsus* as postmodernist (58), and Røssaak similarly writes, “med romaner som *Homo falsus* eller *det perfekte*

mord (1984) ble Jan Kjærstad betegnet som en tidlig, kanskje den første postmoderne forfatter i Norge” [with novels such as *Homo falsus or the perfect murder* (1984) Jan Kjærstad was designated as an early, perhaps the first, postmodern author in Norway] (40). Linneborg and Mork credit Kjærstad’s 1984 *Homo falsus* with being not only postmodern, but “probably the most complexly creative Norwegian novel since *Sug*” (49). They also mention Hoem as a postmodernist, specifically his 1984 novel *Prøvetid* [*Rehearsal Time*], in which they agree that Hoem breaks with socialist realism and shows that he “was and still is the narrator of great metanarratives; an important advocate of a reconstructive answer to The Postmodern Condition” (57). If Hoem can be considered a postmodernist in 1984, it warrants a reconsideration of his earlier works. So, my urging literary historians to consider a postmodernism section in their histories should not be so unexpected. Clearly the currently prevalent decade denominations are inadequate. After all, if both Hoem and Kjærstad wrote postmodernist novels in 1984, why is Hoem a seventies generation author and Kjærstad an eighties generation author?

To be sure, the two men are extraordinarily different and often strikingly antagonistic towards each other. They represent oppositional views on many subjects. In fact in *Dagbladet* in 1986, Kjærstad challenged Hoem to a literary duel:

Siden Edvard Hoem har skrevet mest nedlatende om mitt forsøk på å fokusere på den nye litteraturen og dessuten kalt meg en «ridder», vil jeg—helt i tråd med dette—utfordre ham til litterær tvekamp. Her, en hanske smekket i fjeset, Hoem! Både Hoem og jeg kommer med nye romaner til neste år. Jeg ser på meg selv som en eksponent for den brokete 80-talls litteraturen Hoem så sterkt misliker... Jeg utfordrer deg, Hoem: hvem av oss skriver den beste boka? (178)

[Since Edvard Hoem has written most condescendingly about my attempt to focus on the new literature and in addition called me a “knight,” I would like—completely in line with this—to challenge him to a literary duel. Here, a glove smack to the face, Hoem! Both Hoem and I have new novels coming out next year. I consider myself an exponent of the varied literature of the 80s that Hoem so dislikes... I challenge you, Hoem: which of us will write the best book?]

The two men differ in so many ways, it is difficult to know where to begin. Hoem, for example, believes that authors have a duty as representatives of the intelligentsia to publicly share their opinions on current events. Kjærstad disagrees, pointing out that being an author and a literary scholar does not inherently make his opinion on any given news event more valuable than anyone else’s. In fact, the two generally delimit the opposite ends of a spectrum in Norwegian society—Hoem is a farmer’s son from rural west coast Norway who writes in Nynorsk and Kjærstad is a businessman’s son from suburban Oslo who writes in Bokmål.

While both currently live and write in Oslo, Hoem spent time in Molde as the head of the local theater and Kjærstad spent time in Zimbabwe, about as extreme an opposite as one can find to Molde. Kjærstad definitely brings a more cosmopolitan, international flair to his writing and Hoem a more smalltown, Norwegian West coast flair. While Hoem studied philosophy and literature, it was Kjærstad who was editor of the literary journals *Vinduet* and *Bøk*. And while Kjærstad studied theology, it was Hoem who published *Bibelhistorier* [*Bible Stories*] in 1995. The two authors make a motley pair, but Norway is lucky

to have such diversity. *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* and *Homo falsus* truly illustrate the broad spectrum of Norwegian literary postmodernism.

As I have shown, Hoem and Kjærstad represent extreme opposites in numerous regards and it makes sense to acknowledge these differences. I am by no means implying that because these two men have written two of the most interesting examples of Norwegian postmodern literature that they have anything more in common than that. I expect them to go on disagreeing with each other in perpetuity, like the man and wife in the Norwegian fairy tale *Kjerringa mot strømmen* [*The Woman against the Current*], and the Norwegian literary milieu will be all the richer for their disagreements. At the same time, however, there is little to be gained from categorizing them as seventies and eighties authors respectively. These designations prevent people from seeing how so many of the multifarious texts of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s fit together under the rubric of postmodernism.

Heming Gujord points out the lack of a consistent discussion of postmodernism in his review of the various literary histories available on the Norwegian market for use in upper secondary schools:

Litteraturhistoriene for videregående skole har mange fellestrekk, men det finnes f.eks. ikke et autorisert postmodernismebegrep som litteraturhistorikerne kan samle tekstmaterialet omkring.

[The literary histories for videregående skole have a great many features in common, but for example there is no authorized concept of postmodernism that the literary historians can collect the textual material around.]

As the seventies and eighties recede further and further into the past, concepts such as postmodernism will slowly make their way into Norwegian literary histories. Once this happens, Norwegian authors will more easily receive the recognition in global literary circles that they deserve. And their books, such as *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* and *Homo falsus* will be discussed side by side based on their merits as texts, rather than on their authors' ages or politics.

KJÆRLEIKENS FERJEREISER'S POSTMODERNISM HOEM'S POSTMODERN FICTIONAL ZONE

Hoem creates a postmodern fictional zone in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*. "Han som skriv" declares that the local Møre and Romsdal newspapers and atlas that he consults in Oslo are wrong. Hoem writes

For absolutt siste gong!

Kyststripa mellom Stad og Smøla er forfalska! Kva skal folk tru om resten da? La oss rette på det før det blir for seint.

Han legg til ti nye sjømil uryddig hav på det landet, og ei samling forblåсне fjordbygder innanfor. Strør ut nokre øyar av middles norsk merke og holmar med skogkrullar på. Fører opp nokre ekstra strekningar på rutenettet til Møre og Romsdal Fylkesbåtar, og ein landkommune ingen har høyrte om før: Ramvik.

Dette er Norge, skriv han. (7)

[For the very last time!

The coastline between Stad and Smøla has been tampered with! What will people think about the rest of the map? Let's correct it before it's too late.

He adds ten new nautical miles of chaotic seacoast to that area and a collection of windswept villages along the fjords reaching inland. He scatters around some islands of your average Norwegian variety and some very small ones with clusters of trees on them. Then he enters some extra routes into the network of boats run by Romsdal County and inserts a remote municipality no one has ever heard of before: Ramvik.

This is Norway, he writes.] (5)

By adding additional coastline into Norway's geography, Hoem creates a postmodern space using a technique McHale terms interpolation: "The strategy of interpolation involves introducing an alien space within a familiar space, or *between* two adjacent areas of space where no such 'between' exists" (McHale 46). Hoem places his zone between Stad and Smøla along the Romsdal coast. In this way, he employs a common postmodernist technique, describing geographical spaces that flicker between ontological states, at times portrayed as real, at times as fictional. Markus Nummi's *Kadonnut Pariisi [Paris Lost]* (1995) depicts a similar postmodern spatial zone, but in reverse. Instead of interpolating a space that does not exist in reality, Nummi describes the consternation caused when the entire city of Paris mysteriously vanishes.

Obviously fictional settings are not an exclusive trait of postmodernism. For example, Olav Dunn's *Menneske og maktene [Floodtide of Fate]* (1938) is not at all postmodern and is set on the fictional islands of Øyvære. Hoem turns his fictional setting into a postmodern spatial zone, differentiating himself from Duun and so many others, by problematizing the ontological status of Ramvik/Eikøy. He creates two mutually exclusive stories about this strip of coastline. In the first, Ramvik and Eikøy are fictional places that do not really exist in Norway. The passage cited above where "han som skriv" corrects the map of Norway, inserting "ein landkommune ingen har høyrte om før: Ramvik" [a remote municipality no one has ever heard of before: Ramvik] (7/5) demonstrates this. In the second, Ramvik and Eikøy are real places that exist in Norway and are interconnected with the rest of the country. Buses come to Ramvik from Molde. People on Eikøy read Norwegian newspapers. For example, Anne-Marje "set seg med avisa, Romsdals Budstikke 75 øre, årgang 128" [sits down with the newspaper, *The Romsdal Messenger*, 75 øre, vol. 128] (53/49). A radio station from the real world of Oslo plays over the loudspeaker at the Ramvik ferry dock (11/9). In other words, Hoem's Ramvik/Eikøy zone is both explicitly not real and explicitly real.

Hoem further complicates this by having people move back and forth between the two worlds. "Han som skriv" travels from the real world of Oslo into the fictional world of Ramvik. The mayor of Ramvik goes the other direction, traveling to Oslo for a meeting (92/84). Having people repeatedly cross through this semipermeable membrane between real Norway and fictional Norway draws attention to the relationship between the two ontological planes.

Hoem foregrounds the ontological *duality* of Ramvik/Eikøy's status in other ways as well. On the one hand, Hoem turns the logical relationship between fiction and reality on its head. In his text, fiction gives a truer picture of reality than the local papers and "det oppdiktede er sant mens de empirisk påviselige

fakta gir et falskt bilde av virkeligheten” [the made-up is true while the empirically demonstrable facts give a false picture of reality] (Tjora 1977a, 93).

On the other hand, Hoem creates a world in which degrees of fictionality and reality are not constant. They change depending on one’s vantage point. From an Oslo perspective, the two communities of Ramvik and Eikøy do not exist. For example, they do not appear in the atlas and are not mentioned in the local Møre and Romsdal newspapers that “han som skriv” buys in downtown Oslo (7/5). From a Ramvik/Eikøy perspective, however, the two communities do exist from an Oslo perspective. As Mette Nilsen works in the Rutebilkafé [Bus Station Café] in Ramvik, Hoem writes, “Gjennom høgtalaren i røykekroken høyrer ho dagsnytt frå Oslo. Ramvik kommune er nemnt frå Oslo. Ho får ikkje med seg kva det er. Ho burde fått med seg kva det er...” [Over the loud speakers in the smoking area she hears the evening news from Oslo. They mention the municipality of Ramvik on the broadcast from Oslo. She ought to have listened more closely...] (111/103). In other words, when “han som skriv” is in Oslo, Ramvik and Eikøy do not exist in any official media. But when the characters are in Ramvik or Eikøy, these communities do exist in official media.

So, are Ramvik and Eikøy real or they are fictional in the text? They are simultaneously both real and fictional, flickering back and forth between the two states. By combining the two mutually exclusive alternate geographical zones, Hoem creates what McHale calls a self-erasing narrative. Used by many postmodernists including Pynchon, Borges, and Calvino, “self-erasing narratives... violate linear sequentiality by realizing two mutually-exclusive lines of narrative development at the same time” (McHale 108). In other words, Hoem creates a postmodern fictional zone in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* by interpolating Ramvik and Eikøy into the Romsdal coastline and then both confirming and denying their existence.

BREAKS THE FRAME

McHale describes breaking the frame as when “the level of the fictional world and the ontological level occupied by the author as maker of the fictional world collapse together; the result is something like a short-circuit of the ontological structure” (213). *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* is replete with examples of this type of short-circuit. For example, the text’s inscribed author, “han som skriv,” creates Ramvik and Eikøy and all the characters who live there, but this same author travels physically into the fictional world he has created, meeting his characters face to face. Over the course of the novel, the two levels, “han som skriv”’s level and the subordinate level of the fictional world he creates, repeatedly collapse together, breaking the frame.

Hoem makes it clear that “han som skriv” writes the other characters. At the beginning of the book “han som skriv” tears “varetrekket av skrivemaskinen og går i gang... Dette er Norge, skriv han... han deler ut salmebøker til alle kjerringane og skrur lokalradioen på, tenner eit par fyrlykter ute i skjergarden” [the dust cover off his typewriter and sets to work... This is Norway, he writes... he passes out hymnbooks

to all the old women and switches on the local radio station, lights a couple of signal lanterns out in the skerries] (7/5). Here, “han som skriv” is responsible for radio transmissions, maritime navigation, old women’s possessions, and so forth. Hoem also repeatedly makes clear that “han som skriv” is writing the fictional world of Ramvik/Eikøy, for example, through passages such as this: “kjøkkenbenken eg fekk Olver Kretsen til å gjere i stand, seier han som skriv, ein god kjøkkenbenk i hans hus der ute på øya eg har laga” [the kitchen counter I got Olver Kretsen to build, says the man writing—a good kitchen counter in his house out there on the island I made] (29/26). There can be no doubt in passages such as this that “han som skriv” plays the role of author to the other characters and the world they inhabit.

Hoem short-circuits this narrative framework in numerous places. The most glaring example and, of course, the most frequently cited one is when “han som skriv” and his character Hans Kristiansson meet in a café:

slik inne i den halvmørke kaféen sit ein mann og skriv og lagar til setningar i ei notisbok. Han merkar i ryggen at eit menneske sit og ser på han. Like etter kjem ein ung mann, som ikkje er meir enn tjue, bort til han, og bommar ein sigarett, han gir frå seg, medan han held fram med historia om Hans Kristiansson, som går bort til eit kafébord

og spør om å få ein sigarett av ein mann som sit der og skriv, ved sjutida om kvelden på ein kafé på fjellet. Fyren ser knapt på han, seier versågod. Hans går tilbake til bordet. Han må tilbake til Molde. Men det same han kastar på seg jakka og går mot døra, kjem fyren springande etter med notisboka si og seier: –Skal du til Molde? Kan eg få vere med? (117–118)

[in the dim café, a man sits writing, putting sentences in a notebook. He gets the feeling that someone is standing behind him, watching him. Right afterwards a young man, no more than twenty, comes over to him and bums a cigarette. He gives it to him and continues writing the story of Hans Kristiansson, who goes over to a table in the café

and asks to bum a cigarette from a man who sits there writing, around seven in the evening in a café in the mountains. The guy barely looks at him, just says “Be my guest.” Hans goes back to his table. He has to go back to Molde. Just as he has put on his jacket and is heading for the door, the guy with the notebook comes running after him and says: “Are you going to Molde? Could I get a ride with you?”] (109)

In this excerpt, the character walks over to the table where the author sits, in his role as author, writing the story of the character walking over to him, and asks for a cigarette. The author and the character logically exist on two distinct ontological levels. Gérard Genette calls this *metalepsis*, a violation of narrative levels.

In this excerpt Hoem’s *metalepsis* is particularly egregious. The two men do not simply encounter each other. Instead the narration seems to fold back on itself and the cigarette is borrowed twice. The whole scene is narrated twice as if it were stuck in a Möbius strip. McHale describes the meeting of an author and his characters as:

...a *topos* of postmodernist writing: the *topos* of the face-to-face interview between the author and his character. Although it also occurs in earlier periods—notably, in the modernist period, in Miguel de Unamuno’s *Niebla* (1914)—the interview *topos* has become especially widespread in postmodernism, amounting almost to a postmodernist cliché (213).

Hoem continues the face to face meeting between “han som skriv” and Hans Kristiansson with a playful conversation between the two of them as they take a short drive together. Hans Kristiansson asks the writer, “Er det spennande det du skriv?” [Is the stuff you write exciting?] and the writer responds, “Tja” [Well, yes and no] (119/110). Not only does Hoem repeatedly breaks the frame between “han som skriv”’s level of reality and the world of the characters he is creating. Not only does he break the frame between the two worlds, he also self consciously draws attention to these frame breaks. This exchange between the two men is a classic postmodernist representation of an ontological short-circuit. And Hoem does it with a delightfully understated Norwegian flair.

“Han som skriv” repeatedly comes into physical contact with the characters he has created. At times, he is their author, at times, their co-character. McHale explains that the:

oscillation between authorial presence and absence characterizes the postmodernist author. Fully aware that the author has been declared dead, the postmodernist text nevertheless insists on authorial presence, although not consistently. The author flickers in and out of existence at different levels of the ontological structure and at different points in the unfolding text... The author, in short, is another tool for the exploration and exploitation of ontology (McHale, *Postmodernist* 202).

This is precisely what Hoem does. “Han som skriv” meets his character, Hans Kristiansson, in a café, shares a car ride with him, sits next to him on a flight to Oslo, and so forth. “Han som skriv” steps in to arrange a mirror on the ferry and the price of bus tickets to Ramvik. At other times, he remains outside of the story, sitting at his typewriter in Oslo and composing. In this regard as well, Hoem is a postmodernist author.

PROBLEMATIZES FACT MEETS FICTION

Hoem also problematizes the interaction between fact and fiction in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* in a typically postmodernist fashion. He creates a fictional world where he would have the reader believe that “han som skriv”’s fictional depiction of Ramvik and Eikøy gives a truer picture of life in a small Romsdal town than all the official statistics, reports, and documents you can find in Oslo. Hoem conflates fictional representation with documentary fact. Of course this trait is not limited to postmodernism—for example, Johan Turi’s *Muitalus sámiiid birra* (1910) [*Turi’s book of Lapland* (1931)] interweaves a great deal of documentary information on Sami customs, beliefs, and folk medicine into his fictional narrative. Hoem’s approach to fact and fiction is postmodern because he makes the interrogation of the fact/fiction barrier into a dominant theme, consistently dramatizing the confrontation between the two.

Hoem draws attention to the interaction of fact and fiction in the text by removing all reasonable balance from what facts “han som skriv” has control over. On the one hand, Hoem makes clear that “han som skriv” creates the town of Ramvik with a few strokes on his typewriter. Similarly, he “strør ut nokre øyar av middles norsk merke” [scatters around some islands of your average Norwegian variety] (7/5). He also controls the weather in his fictional communities: “han skrur av regnet før lærarinne Henriette

Brunberg skal gå heim, men slepper stormbygene forbi Skogmanns hus, kastar dei forbi kaiene på Ekøy...” [he turns off the rain before the teacher Henrietta Brunberg is to go home, but lets squalls pass by Skogmann’s house, hurls them past the docks on Eikøy...] (40/36). In fact, as he flies from Oslo to Molde, “Årø Lufthavn, som først skal opnast året etter, steller seg fiks ferdig for hans skuld” [Molde’s Årø Airport, scheduled for completion the following year, is suddenly all finished, just for him] (52/48). These examples demonstrate “han som skriv”’s mastery over the factual aspects of his fictional world. Certainly in the real world one cannot create islands out of thin air or turn the rain off, and airport construction projects are never completed ahead of schedule for the convenience of a single traveler.

On the other hand, Hoem juxtaposes these abilities with “han som skriv”’s inability to control other aspects of his fictional world. For example, he has to write to the ferry officials to have a mirror installed in the women’s restroom on the Eikøy ferry:

Før eg let Marianne gå inn på toalettet på Eikøyferja hadde eg skrive brev til Fylkesbåtane og bede dei innstendig om å få opp ein spegel der inne, slik at jentene som reiser til kommunesentret kan vite at dei ser skikkeleg ut på håret når dei går på land... (12).

[Before I allowed Marianna to go into the W.C. on the Eik Island ferry I had written a letter to the county boatlines and begged them to put up a mirror in there, so that the girls traveling to town can make sure their hair looks alright when they go ashore...] (9–10).

And similarly, when he does not know what to charge one of the characters for a bus ticket, he needs to “tinga rikstelefon til Norges Rutebileierforbund for å ta opp forhandlingar om kva turen frå Ramvik til Molde skal koste” [put in a long distance call to the Norwegian Bus Owner’s Association to initiate negotiations on what the ride from Ramvik to Molde will cost] (71–72/66). Hoem draw attention to “han som skriv”’s lack of control by having him be outraged when he discovers that the price is NOK 6.40. “Han som skriv” yells at the man from the bus owner’s association that the price is too high and the man hangs up on him (74/68)! This clearly demonstrates “han som skriv”’s lack of control over his fictional world.

In other words, Hoem emphasizes the oscillation between “han som skriv”’s ability and inability to control fiction and fact. He develops two mutually exclusive lines of narrative development at the same time. In the one “han som skriv” is writing a fictional story about Ramvik and Eikøy, and in the other “han som skriv” has the same amount of control over his environment as any other Norwegian. Hoem’s text is postmodern because it flickers back and forth between the two stances. Hoem makes the transition from one realm to the other as jarring as possible in contrast to pre-postmodernist authors, such as Johan Turi, who tend to blend fact and fiction seamlessly together.

BLENDS POPULAR CULTURE AND HIGH CULTURE

One of postmodernism’s most widely recognized traits is blending high and low culture. Certainly Hoem’s text exhibits a milder version of this than in many other postmodernist novels—one has only to compare *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* to *Homo falsus* to see that Hoem is on the conservative end of the scale among Norwegian postmodernists when it comes to including popular culture references, both in terms of

frequency and degree. Compared to Kjærstad's extremely frequent "low" culture references—the list includes actors (Greta Garbo, Marlon Brando, Spencer Tracy, Elvis), movies (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, *Spartacus*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Last Tango in Paris*, *The Shining*, *Jaws*), and consumer products (Coca Cola, Benson and Hedges cigarettes) among other things—Hoem's are restrained indeed. Nonetheless, Hoem's inclusion of popular culture references sets him apart from nonpostmodernists.

This is easily illustrated with a comparison of the difference in cultural references between *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* and a pre-postmodernist novel, such as Olav Duun's *Menneske og maktene* (1938). Both texts mention the role of movies in rural inhabitants' lives. In describing Roald, Duun writes, "...etter han såg film i byen vart det ofte til at han såg det for seg, lange kinofortelingar, tusen meter på ein kveld taksterte han det til, og det var utor live sjøl alt i hop. Sundagskveldane gjekk hand over kleivane og til byen, og såg dei filmane som var å sjå der" [...after he had seen a film in the town, it often happened that he worked out long film scripts in his mind's eye, a thousand meters an evening he reckoned, and the whole lot of it from real life. On Sunday evenings he made his way over the hills to the town and saw the films which were showing there] (115/145). Duun's only other reference to the movies is the rumor that the rogue Emil, "skulde ha skapt ein kino der nord ein stan, i lag med ei dame" [was supposed to have started up a cinema in some place up north, together with a woman] (/59). If Duun's novel were postmodernist, one would expect specific Marlene Dietrich lyrics or Greta Garbo references. Of course Duun was not a postmodernist and no such specific references are made.

Hoem, by contrast, includes a number of specific movie references. He even describes a movie scene in which Nat King Cole "set seg til pianoet på lerretet i kinolokalet, og spelar «Careless Love», love and love, lar fingrane sprike over tangentane..." [sits down at the piano on the screen in the movie theater, and plays "Careless Love," love and love, letting his fingers spread over the keyboard...] (16/14). Hoem includes specific musical references as well. He features "high culture" music, having Henriette overhear a segment from the opera *Tristan and Isolde*, which causes her to reconsider killing herself (175/162). The most frequent and amusing musical reference Hoem makes is to a winning Swedish entry from the Grand Prix contest. Hoem repeats this "low culture" musical reference so many times it constitutes a recurrent motif. Mette seems to have the song stuck in her head—"det börjar verka kärlek, banne mej!" [Damn, if this doesn't look like love!] (152/141). You would never find a reference like that in a book by Olav Duun!

In fact, the closest Duun comes to explicitly referring to any public figures at all are Torger's references to Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and to Dybwad Brochmann, the founder of the *Samfundspartiet* political party (119/151[left out in translation]). Otherwise, Duun does not mention any famous actors, any movies, or any brand names.

Hoem includes a number of references to specific people, including Wergeland, Ørjasæter, Grundtvig, Christopher Bruun, and Nat King Cole. Hoem includes a lengthy citation from Ørjasæter and

numerous shorter quotations from Bruun. He also mentions books by name, whether real or fictional,—including *Socialdemokratiske perspektiver* [*Perspectives in Social Democracy*], *En leges veiledning* [*A Doctor's Guide*], and the section in the almanac on “Stjernerhimmelen sett fra jorda” [The Stars as Seen from Earth]—and newspapers—*Dagbladet*, *Klassekampen*, and *Romsdals Budstikke*. In terms of print media, even the comic book genre appears in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*; one of the bus drivers describes a dream where the Phantom goes into the Jørgen Gjenstad paint store in Molde (49/45). Hoem also includes the name of another business, the café—Rutebilkafé. While he does not specify the brand of coffee the characters drink or the type of cigarettes they smoke, he does specify that “han som skriv” flies from Oslo to Molde and back on a Braathens flight. Clearly, Hoem’s use of low culture references has more in common with Kjærstad than with Duun. In this regard as well, Hoem’s text is postmodern.

REVISES TRADITION

In many ways, Hoem’s *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* (1972) is also a postmodernist revision of Olav Duun’s *Menneske og maktene* (1938). Hoem pays homage to Duun’s text while at the same time introducing a level of experimental self-consciousness and playful irreverence that are absent in Duun’s text. A full-length comparison of the two texts would be an excellent topic for a full-length academic study. Here I will limit my comparison to the ways Hoem extends Duun’s project in a postmodernist direction, telling a postmodernist version of the now traditional Norwegian story, taking it to the next level as it were in terms of metaphysical dominant, geographical focus, role of nature, and narrative perspective.

The two authors share a couple of clear similarities. Both come from small communities on Norway’s northwest coast—Duun from the island of Jøa outside of Trondheim and Hoem from Fræna in Romsdal. Their most striking similarity is that both write in Nynorsk. Indeed, given the critical acclaim both authors have received, they are both part of a remarkably small circle of elite Nynorsk authors. These two texts also bear striking similarities. *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* and *Menneske og maktene* both depict small coastal communities on the verge of a significant political event. Duun’s novel is widely read as an allegory of the impending storm of World War 2. And Hoem’s text, set in 1970, looks at small coastal communities just before the 1972 referendum on whether or not Norway should join the European Common Market. Both texts are collective novels in which the authors portray the intimate lives of a number of individual characters and at the same time the story of the rural community as a whole.

Hoem revisits and expands on Duun’s project in four principal ways. He expands the metaphysical dominant in the text from an epistemological dominant, more typical of modernist fiction, to an ontological one, more typical of postmodernist fiction. Hoem also extends the geography of his tale one step beyond Duun. Duun limits his text to the islands of Øyvære and how people came to live there. By contrast, Hoem juxtaposes events on the island of Eikøy and its closest mainland town, Ramvik, with events and people in Oslo to create consistent rural/urban tension in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*. In this way he extends Duun’s geographical scope one level, beyond the local to the national. Hoem also expands on Duun’s depiction of

nature. The laws of nature represent the ultimate source of power in Duun's text, and all the residents of Øyvære are exposed to the storm that batters their small community. Nature and weather are also powerful forces in Hoem's text, but Hoem carefully depicts two different groups, the city people who comically struggle against the weather and the rural Romsdal people who have a graceful, natural understanding of weather patterns and the ability and strength to deal with them. Hoem also moves beyond Duun's depiction of nature as the ultimate source of power to portray the economic, societal and political forces of centralization and capitalism as far more powerful than nature. Finally, Duun narrates his novel through a variety of points of view, sometimes presenting the same scene from different characters' perspectives. Hoem takes this one step further, to a meta level, sometimes presenting the same scene from a character's point of view and from the author's point of view. In each of these regards, Hoem pays homage to Duun's tradition, but also transforms the old story into a new, postmodernist tale.

Metaphysical dominant

Duun's text contains a single ontological level. The people of Øyvære each have their own stories and experiences, and in telling their stories, Duun focuses predominantly *epistemological* questions: How do different individuals experience and interpret events? What do they know? How reliable are they? How does the knowable change as it passes from knower to knower? (cf. McHale, *Postmodernist* 9). In other words, *Menneske og maktene* depicts a stable, realistic world. Readers experience this single world through various points of view over the course of the novel. Different characters know and experience the textual world's factual events differently, but the factual events themselves are immutable.

At no point does Duun change the events that have happened. Rather, the reader gradually learns about how different characters experience and interpret events. By reading about a fixed set of factual events from a number of different characters' perspectives, readers gradually discern an ever more detailed understanding of the events that have occurred and can form an opinion on the characters based on how they report or experience a specific event. In other words, there is a single, stable world in the text that forms the backdrop against which the movements of the characters' minds may be displayed (cf. McHale, *Postmodernist* 234).

Readers see that different individuals experience and interpret events differently. For example, Borghild and Torger interpret Arne's behavior differently. The ontological facts of Arne's life are clear and never questioned in the text—Borghild and Arne's mother abandons them, Borghild marries Torger in part to make a home for Arne, Arne dies at sea, etc. The questions that surround Arne's life are epistemological, they all have to do with how different people interpret Arne's life and his place in the world, how certain they are about the facts, what the limits are to what they know about Arne, how they share their knowledge of Arne with others, and so forth. In Arne's case these epistemological questions include questions like "Why does Torger think Arne is lazy and egotistical?" and "Why does Borghild feel such responsibility toward Arne and protect him and cover up for his mistakes?"

Duun addresses the question of how different individuals experience and interpret events. Mildrid of Vikland's pregnancy is an excellent example. Mildrid writes in a letter to Roald saying that she is pregnant and that he was the father. The impact of Mildrid's pregnancy is different on each person involved. Mildrid describes needing courage and expecting hurt, shame, and tough decisions. Despite that, Mildrid writes, "Aud var det verst for, ho var ikkje 'over det' enda (men det var han utan skyld i)" [It was worst for Aud, for she was no 'over it' yet; but that wasn't his fault] (139/176). Apparently this is because Aud has a crush on Roald and is experiencing heartache from his behavior. Roald himself fears it must be obvious to everyone he is the father. He is uncomfortable about Mildrid's news, but soon gets used to it and goes on pursuing his next young woman, Vebjørg. The facts surrounding Mildrid's pregnancy are undisputed, but different individuals experience and interpret it differently. The ontological state of Mildrid's pregnancy is unquestioned. Rather, Duun explores the epistemological questions it raises.

Readers also discover what different characters know about certain events. Mildrid's pregnancy is also an excellent example of this. Mildrid's letter informs Roald that the facts that she is pregnant and that he is the father cannot be denied. A newspaper reports that a farmer's daughter was lying at death's door after an abortion. Roald assumes this refers to Mildrid. Roald's father seems to confirm this when he tells Roald that a man in town says that one of the daughters at Vikland was the one who had been in trouble. When the sheriff comes out to Øyvære, Roald asks him, "Eg er utlagt både til barnefar og barnemordar nå da?" [Am I now supposed to have murdered the child as well as being its father?] (153/194). Roald clearly assumes the sheriff is there for him. The sheriff responds, "De? De? Jasså? Jasså. Nei skryt nå med måte. De vart ikkje nemnt i den saka..." [You? You? Well, well! Do try and be modest! You weren't mentioned at all...] (153/194). Clearly beneath all the speculation and vague reports, there is a stable set of factual events that took place. Readers are able to piece together the true sequence of events gradually as they discover what different characters know about what happened. Once again, Duun emphasizes the epistemological aspects of how the knowable changes as it passes from person to person. The ontological status of the events themselves is never in question.

By contrast, Hoem's text contains multiple ontological levels and an explicit focus on ontological questions. The text's inscribed author, "han som skriv," exists on a fictional level distinct from the level of the characters he creates. Much as in Duun's novel, the people of Eikøy and Ramvik each have their own stories and experiences. But while Duun focused on epistemological questions of *knowing* the characters, Hoem takes this to another level focusing his novel on problems of *modes of being*. He poses predominantly *ontological* questions: Which world is this? What happens when different kinds of worlds are juxtaposed or when boundaries between worlds are violated? What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world it projects? (cf. McHale, *Postmodernist* 10).

Whereas *Menneske og maktene* features a stable, reconstructable world filtered to the reader through different characters' points of view, Hoem specifically destabilizes the world presented in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* from the very outset. On the very first page of the book, Hoem tells the reader that

newspapers, maps, and atlases have all been falsified. In this way Hoem begins the text by questioning the validity of normally dependable sources. He lays out two distinct modes of being: the reality of Oslo and the reality of the missing section of coastline in Romsdal. The two different realities are distinct, but Hoem does not keep them separate. Rather, he problematizes the relationship between the two by constantly flickering back and forth between the two. Sometimes “han som skriv” can turn the rain off in Eikøy with the flick of his pen, clearly marking Eikøy as fictional. At other times, he cannot make Ramvik or Eikøy out because of the fog, which he cannot control, clearly marking them as part of the real world. By constantly transgressing the delineations between real and fictional ontologies, Hoem emphasizes ontological questions such as “Which world is this?” and “What happens when different worlds are juxtaposed or when boundaries between worlds are violated?”

Hoem’s description of Marianne’s pregnancy is a kind of postmodernist revision of Duun’s description of Mildrid’s pregnancy. One of the most striking differences is that Hoem include’s Marianne’s perspective. In Duun’s text, Mildrid’s letter is the reader’s only insight into Mildrid’s side of the story. Hoem repeated returns to Marianne’s experience of the fact of her pregnancy. She feels sick to her stomach, her nipples feel a bit sore, and Hoem traces her experiences at length from her own perspective—her phone call to a nurse who refers her to the social services councilor, the pregnancy test, the social services councilor, and so forth. While it is unlikely to find a female character complaining of sore nipples in a modernist text, describing Marianne’s pregnancy from Marianne’s perspective is not overwhelmingly postmodern in and of itself. Hoem’s novel is postmodern in its depiction of the letter.

Duun includes the text of Mildrid’s letter to Roald. The equivalent letter in Hoem’s text is the one that Hans Kristiansson, the father of Marianne’s baby, writes to Marianne before he leaves for Oslo. When “han som skriv” asks Hans Kristiansson about Marianne, Hans explains “eg har skrive til henne. Eit brev” [I have written to her. A letter] (187/174). Hoem distinguishes himself as a postmodernist in how he deals with this letter. Hoem writes, “og han som skriv prøver å lage brevet, men får det ikkje til” [And the man writing tries to create the letter, but can’t do it] (187/174). In an exquisite example of a narrative shortcircuit, Hans is able to write his letter to Marianne without difficulty, but “han som skriv” who created the fictional story of Hans and Marianne in the first place, is not able to write the letter. Although this is paradoxical, Hoem proclaims it to be, quite simply, the way the story goes.

Hoem further probes the ontological problems in the pregnancy/letter situation by seating Hans next to “han som skriv” on the Braathens flight the two share to Oslo. On the plane, Hans explains to “han som skriv” that “eg må forsvinne ei stund... eg vei ikkje kor lenge. Det er eitt eller anna, som eg må få orden på, som eg ikkje kan greie her” [I have to disappear for a while... I don’t know for how long. There are several things I have to straighten out, which I can’t take care of here] (187/173). In other words, in Duun’s text the complexity surrounding Mildrid’s pregnancy comes from the pregnancy itself and how people deal with it. In Hoem’s text, the baby’s father leaves the fictional world, in which he’s gotten

himself into an awkward situation, for the real world of Oslo. Hans Kristiansson transcends his ontological level as a character in the text to join the text's inscribed author, "han som skriv," in the real world, a world that is ontologically one level higher than the fictional world of Ramvik and Eikøy. Hoem's take on a young woman's pregnancy is a postmodernist revision of Duun's.

This is true of *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* in general as well. While Duun's reader encounters a series of stable, consistent events through the perspectives of a variety of different characters, this is absolutely not the case for Hoem's readers. *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* does not contain a single, stable world; it contains two variously conflicting, mutually exclusive worlds. McHale describes this as a patent characteristic of postmodernism:

To speak of 'world-views,' and the juxtaposition or confrontation of world-views, is to speak in epistemological terms; to take the metaphor literally, projecting worlds which are realizations of discursive world-views, is to convert an epistemological motif into an ontological one... Postmodernist fiction, by heightening the polyphonic structure and sharpening the dialogue in various ways, foregrounds the ontological dimension of the confrontation among discourses, thus achieving a polyphony of *worlds* (166).

The reader expects Ramvik and Eikøy to either exist or not exist, but in Hoem's text they do both. They flicker in and out of existence. The reader expects "han som skriv" and Hans Kristiansson to be either authors or characters, but they are both. The world projected in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* does not provide a stable backdrop against which the movements of the characters' minds can be displayed (cf. McHale, *Postmodernist* 234). Hoem expands Duun's simple, single-level ontology into a far more complicated ontological exploration, one that is, according to Brian McHale's definition of postmodernist fiction being dominated by ontological issues (10), postmodernist.

Geography and the weather

Hoem also revisits and simultaneously expands on Duun's project in terms of geography. Duun's text is focused around a single geographical hub, Øyvære. Hoem's, by contrast, focuses on the tension between an island community similar to Øyvære and the urban center of Norway, Oslo. In this sense as well, Duun's text features a single geographical focus just as it featured a single ontological world, and Hoem's text features a dual geographical focus just as it features a problematic, dual set of ontological worlds. Hoem pays homage to Duun's geography, but also transcends it.

Both Duun and Hoem center their books in seemingly fictional island communities along the Trøndelag and Romsdal coast. In *Menneske og maktene*, the characters live on the islands of Langholmen and Heimvære. Duun narrates everything relating to the outside world from an Øyvære-centric perspective. He generally refers to the world outside Øyvære with vague references to compass directions such as "austfrå" [from the East] (146), "nordetter" [towards the North] (61), or "der vestpå" [there in the West] (101). Other towns play little role in Duun's text. Oslo carries no apparent weight.

In *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*, by contrast, Oslo plays an important counterpoint to Ramvik and Eikøy. Hoem depicts a clash of urban and rural cultures, as in the fairy tale about the city mouse and the

country mouse. He inserts numerous little jabs at Oslo's urban world. For example, Mette's *Klassekampen* newspapers begin their journey to Ramvik in "eit skittent hus ned ved Akerselva" [a dirty building down by the Aker River] (17/15). Hoem highlights the callous disregard city people have for rural Norway when he describes "ein ung mann ved ei adresseringsmaskin, som kunne lure ein augneblink på: Ramvik kvar i helsike er det? Før han lempa pakken saman med mange andre inn i ein varebil og raste utover mot flyplassen" [a young man at an address machine, who might have wondered for a moment: where the hell is Ramvik? Before he loaded the package along with many others into a delivery truck and rushed off toward the airport] (17/15). Rural Norway is merely a fleeting thought to Oslo residents, Hoem implies.

While in Duun's text the weather and natural forces threaten all the characters equally, the weather acts differently on urban and rural characters in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*. The city folk have trouble dealing with the weather appropriately; they do not dress suitably and cannot predict what the weather will be like. The country people by contrast are at one with the weather. They enjoy the weather and deal with it deftly, like wild animals.

For example, Hoem depicts "han som skriv"'s foolishness at going to the café in the mountain pass, "ein kafé der han kan sitte og ha oversikt. I Oktober. Og så er det bare tåke og atter tåke å sjå nå han kjem opp..." [a café where he can sit and get an overview. In October. And then, once he's up there, he sees nothing but fog and more fog...] (48). Here Hoem mocks the outsider from Oslo who is not prepared to deal with the weather on the west coast. The locals are depicted as a tougher breed. Not only do they know what to expect from the weather, they gain a certain sublime enjoyment from it. For example, as Mette strolls through Ramvik, we read:

Regnet silar ned, i lyssirklane bortover, ho blir ståande og sjå på all væta, helt til ho oppdagar at ho har ei viss glede av å plage seg sjølv med kor grå og trøysteslaus denne vinteren i Ramvik kjem til å bli (20).

[The rain is pouring down, she can see it in the circles of light beneath the street lamps, and she stands there looking at all the wetness, until she finally realizes that she takes a certain pleasure in torturing herself with thoughts of how gray and dreary this winter in Ramvik is going to be] (17).

This juxtaposition of worldviews carries over particularly well in Hoem's description of the visiting municipal engineer's shoe troubles. Anna-Marja Kretsen feels sorry for him and his delicate city shoes, walking through the mud on Eikøy. She notices "ei tjukk rand av grus og lort rundt kanten på skorne hans, det heldt på å tørke inn, og var dei ikkje tette dei skorne, så var han våt på føtene òg" [a thick border of gravel and manure drying around the edge of his shoes. And if they weren't water-tight, those shoes, well then his feet were probably wet too] (69/63). In fact, she's so distracted by his shoes that she cannot concentrate on what he says. Her thoughts keep going back to those shoes and their thin leather soles: "det var ikkje meining i å gå med slikt på denne tida av året, han kom til å bli forkjølt før han kom seg tilbake til Molde eller Oslo eller kvar han kom ifrå" [What was the point of wearing such things at this time of year? He would catch cold before he got himself back to Molde or Oslo or wherever it was he came from.]

(69/64). The municipal engineer, coming to Eikøy from some larger city, does not know how to dress or walk appropriately in the world of Eikøy. Humorously, he cannot avoid the puddles or even the manure. He cannot even choose suitable attire to wear to work.

This is contrasted with the island residents. Note the following description of island residents dealing with the weather:

på skoleplassen ein flokk gutar som slår ball så væta driv. Han sit ved kjøkkenbordet inne hos Krok-Anna og har sett husvennen hoppe mot lærarhuset som ein sporv i sine små svarte skor, for å gå klar av dei verste dika. Vinden, den flerrar gjennom vasspyttane, slik yta på kaffekoppen kjem i opprør når Skogmann blæs på den (66).

[A flock of boys on the school grounds playing ball, splashing water everywhere. He is sitting at the kitchen table at Krok-Anna's place and has noticed the friend of the family hopping toward the teacher's house like a sparrow in his small black shoes, trying to miss the worst puddles. The wind ripples across the pools of water, like the surface of the coffee becomes turbulent when Skogmann blows on it] (61).

Hoem consistently compares the locals to birds. The boys are like a “flock,” splashing and happily playing ball in the wetness. The friend of the family hops like a sparrow, conscious of his surroundings and fitting into the landscape as if he were a bird. He gracefully misses the worst of the puddles. To top off Hoem's images of small-town bliss, the puddles themselves are compared to the surface of a nice, cozy cup of coffee.

In summary, Hoem revises the geographical focus of Duun's text, telling the story of a rural island community, but in a postmodernist way. Duun's novel pits mankind, represented by the residents of Øyvære, in a universal struggle against the forces of nature. Hoem tips his hat to *Menneske og maktene* by depicting a similar crew of characters in a similar island community. At the same time, Hoem tells a postmodernist version of Duun's story. The weather treats rural Norwegians and city Norwegians differently in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*. This serves to further magnify the dual flickering I mentioned above in terms of ontologies in Hoem's text. The weather treats two sets of people differently, instead of impacting all humans as one would expect. Hoem also introduces a flicker into the text in the way he deals with geography and its impact on perspective.

HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

Another manner in which Hoem's text is postmodern is its revisitation of history. Ironically, although much of the scholarship on *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* in Norway has focused, on the one hand, on Hoem's treatment of politics and the historical lead up to the 1972 referendum, and, on the other hand, on Hoem's use of metafiction, no one has put the two together to call Hoem's text what it is, a classic example of historiographic metafiction. In her *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon names historiographic metafiction as the most characteristic form of postmodernist literature and names a number of traits prevalent within historiographic metafiction—including installing a totalizing order only to contest it through radical provisionality, emphasizing the enunciative situation, confronting the paradox of the

particular versus the general, and questioning whose truth gets told. Hoem's text is historiographic metafiction in that it does each of these things, and by extension is postmodernist in this regard as well.

Hoem installs a totalizing order in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* in two primary ways. He inscribes the text with "han som skriv", an opinionated, all powerful inscribed authorial figure. From the first page of the text, Hoem establishes the structural premise of the book; "han som skriv" is telling the true story of a section of rural Norway that has not been told correctly. The entire text exists because "han som skriv" sees that official Norway has not taken notice of his section of the Romsdal coastline and he takes matters into his own hands to write the story of *this* Norway, his Norway: "Dette er Norge, skriv han." [This is Norway, he writes] (5). The second totalizing order Hoem inscribes the text with is Norway's hierarchical division into layers of social and political administration. Eikøy is administered from Ramvik, Ramvik from Molde, and Molde from Oslo. Hoem makes this clear through his description of the "sju osteklokkene om du vil" [seven glass cheese bells, if you will] that hierarchically surround "Ramvik, Møre og Romsdal, Norge, Europa, Jorda, Solsystemet, Universet..." [Ramvik, Romsdal County, Norway, Europe, The Earth, The Solar System, The Milky Way Galaxy...] (20/18). Hoem also reinforces this rigid order by carefully assigning the proper term to Ramvik, explaining "Ramvik voks seg stor nok til å kunne kallast [kommune]senter" [Ramvik has grown large enough to be called a municipality] (12/10). Hoem also emphasizes the order of political Norway by prominently featuring Oslo in his text. For the sake of comparison, *Menneske og maktene* begins and ends in Øyvære. Duun never mentions Oslo. By contrast, Hoem constantly bounces back and forth between Oslo and Ramvik/Eikøy. He installs Oslo and official Norway, as it is reflected in newspapers, maps, atlases, radio broadcasts, and so forth, as the nation's hub. Hoem discusses Ramvik and Eikøy only in relation to Oslo and urban Norway; the two communities are defined by opposition in the text. They exist because they are not part of urban Norway.

Hoem installs this "totalizing order, only to contest it, by its radical provisionality..." (Hutcheon 84). In fact, he builds the book on contesting it. Hoem contests the totalizing order of "han som skriv"'s authority by having him lose control over his characters and enter their world. He wields the authority and power of authorship only provisionally. At times he seems utterly unable to control, or even see clearly, what his characters do. Hoem contests the order of geographical hierarchies by asserting that many seemingly dependable informational sources have been falsified. "Han som skriv" writes the book because he disagrees with the official records: "For siste gong! For absolutt siste gong! Kystripa mellom Stad og Smøla er forfalska!" [For the last time! For the very last time! The coastline between Stad and Smøla has been tampered with!] (7/5). He makes Norway's geographical and political order radically provisional, by creating a postmodern fictional zone where physical places are at times real and at times utterly fictional.

The second trait of historiographic metafiction that Hoem uses is emphasizing the enunciative situation. Hutcheon notes that historiographic metafiction's "emphasis on the enunciative situation—text, producer, receiver, historical, and social context—reinstalls a kind of (very problematic) communal

project” (82). This seems to contradict a feature of postmodernism that many scholars adhere to, that postmodernist literature is inherently anti-collective. For example, in *Postmodernism och metafiktion i Norden*, Jansson writes:

Postmodernismens värld är starkt pragmatisk inriktad och politiskt sett på en och samma gång anarkistisk och individualistisk och samtidigt också tendentiellt konservativ eller åtminstone tydligt anti-kollektivistisk och anti-socialistisk (7).

[Postmodernism’s world has a strong pragmatic focus and seen in political terms is at once anarchic and individualistic and at the same time also purposefully conservative or at the very least clearly anti-collective and anti-socialist.]

Hoem’s text disproves Jansson’s claim and supports Hutcheon’s. Hoem’s communal project is to make readers aware of the need to question the versions of official history they receive from Oslo. By destabilizing “han som skriv”’s authority and the essential believability of Oslo’s reality, Hoem urges rural Norwegian readers to act as a community on the grassroots level, to question the official record, to be suspicious of the Oslo perspective and cautious about the documents they sign, and like Mette Nilsen to stand up for what they believe in. *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* is at once both individualistic, featuring “han som skriv”’s attention grabbing primadonna antics such as creating islands out of thin air and turning the rain on and off at will, and at the same time clearly pro-collective, pro-socialist, featuring a strong message about the spirit, tenacity, and tribulations of Norway’s small coastal communities.

Of course, Hoem emphasizes the enunciative situation in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* in a number of obvious ways. He self-consciously emphasizes the text’s status as text, making frequent references to the producer of that text, whose only name is “han som skriv” [he who is writing]. Hoem makes such extensive use of metafiction that Sverre Tusvik writes, “Lesarar som er uvane med slike skrive- og lese-måter, vil kanhende oppleve det som forvirrende...” [Readers who aren’t used to such modes of writing and reading may experience it as confusing...] (207). Hoem also self-consciously draws historical and social context into the novel. Through the numerous citations from Christopher Bruun and the Mette’s grassroots communist campaigning, Hoem draws attention to the historical and political context. He sets the novel in October of 1970, as Norway prepares for the 1972 referendum. He portrays an “isolated island community threatened with forced depopulation by the government” (Shackelford 178). Hoem very much emphasizes the enunciative situation—text, producer, receiver, historical, and social context—in *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* to reinstall a kind of problematic communal project, and in doing so, he is writing historiographic metafiction.

The third trait of historiographic metafiction that Hoem features is what Hutcheon calls confronting the paradox of the particular versus the general (cf. 73). Hoem does this by enforcing an on-again, off-again ontological shimmer between Oslo’s and Ramvik’s versions of events. According to Hoem, the particulars of Ramvik and Eikøy cannot be summarized into any kind of general. All of the national, generalized documents in Oslo are wrong when it comes right down to the particulars of

Ramvik/Eikøy. “Han som skriv” sets out to fix this situation, but as he travels into the world of Ramvik/Eikøy, he too encounters problems seeing this world clearly. He loses track of various characters, discovers that he cannot get any kind of accurate overview because of fog, and realizes he is going to have to start taking notes to keep all the information straight. In the world of *Kjærløikens ferjereiser*, if you generalize, you will be inaccurate in terms of the particulars and if you look closely at the particulars you will lose sight of the general.

The fourth trait of historiographic metafiction that Hoem features is questioning whose truth gets told. There are multiple truths in the text and they are relative to specific geographical locations. The truth in Oslo does not hold for Ramvik/Eikøy and vice versa. Hutcheon explains that “postmodern fiction does not ‘aspire to tell the truth’ (qtd. in Foley 1986a 26) as much as to question *whose* truth gets told” (91). Hoem consistently does just this in *Kjærløikens ferjereiser*. Throughout the text, he draws the veracity of things said and written in Oslo into question, creating a complicated textual world in which Oslo and official Norway are blind to entire sections of rural Norway. Ramvik and Eikøy appear to be invisible from an Oslo perspective—they do not appear in official documents such as newspapers, atlases, and maps. Hoem’s text literally ferries back and forth between presenting Ramvik and Eikøy as real and as fictional. “Han som skriv” can only truly see the events in Ramvik and Eikøy when he is physically there, and even then he humorously loses sight and control of various characters.

In addition to the four traits mentioned above, Hoem uses both of the narrative modes that Hutcheon describes historiographic metafiction as privileging: multiple points of view and an overtly controlling narrator (cf. 85). The text is a collective novel depicting the thoughts and points of view of the characters who live in Ramvik and Eikøy—Karl Magnus Skogmann, Arve and Henriette Brunberg, Olver, Anna-Marja, and Marianne Kretsen, Hans Kristiansson, and Mette Nilsen—as well as the point of view of the text’s author, “han som skriv.” In a strikingly modernist fashion, Hoem flips quickly between multiple points of view, from Mette’s thoughts on her pregnancy to Arve’s memories of the early days of his relationship with Henriette, to Skogmann’s thoughts on literature and the passing of his job, and so forth. At the same time, Hoem problematizes all of these characters’ very ontological natures by making them subordinate to “han som skriv.” Hoem makes “han som skriv” an overtly controlling narrator, but then repeatedly short-circuits his control and his position of authority. Hoem challenges readers to question the validity of the text they read.

At the same time, Hoem takes an underspoken jab at the national capital. Oslo exerts enormous power over rural Norwegian communities, both in the novel and in the real world. In the text, Eikøy’s postmaster is “deposed” and numerous services are centralized away from the island to Ramvik. This reflects countless similar real-life experiences. To my great consternation, my own local post office branch and bank at Fantoft were closed down in 1998. Their services were inconveniently centralized to the main post office branch in downtown Bergen. Hoem tells the personal, human side of a number of stories like

this. For example, the postmaster has nothing to do, keeping his office clean in the hopes of being asked to open it again. In addition, Hoem describes the suffering of characters whose jobs have been centralized to the large, dehumanized administration building called “Storkorset” [the Big Cross] and characters who have to go there, such as Marianne seeking permission for her abortion, because they have to interact with the powers that be in Oslo through this cold, impersonal municipal interface.

Hoem chooses to revisit the time just before the 1972 EEC referendum. Hoem knew when he released *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* in 1974 that the “no” campaign, which he had fervently supported, had won. The text is a fictional critique of Oslo’s centralizing perspective. Hoem implies that as people look out on Norway from their urban points of view they are unable to see true rural Norway. He ends his text with “han som skriv” looking out of the airplane window as he returns to Oslo, observing that: “Der går ein skugge på vegen der borte, det kan vere eit menneske. Det kan vere Mette Nilsen, som går frå hus til hus.” [A shadow passes on the road over there, it may be a human being. It may be Mette Nilsen, walking from house to house] (187, 174). But it is historical fact that, among others, rural grassroots activists just like Mette, whom Hoem alleges cannot be clearly seen from Oslo, changed the course of history for urban Norway by rising up like a floodtide to reject the 1972 referendum. In the text, the government spokesperson, the “sosialkuratoren” [social services councilor], gets to decide whether Marianne is allowed to have an abortion or not, what happens in her very body. At the same time, seemingly insignificant figures in national Norwegian politics like Mette Nilsen decide whether Oslo gets to join the EEC. Hoem’s text is historiographic metafiction, and once again he wields its tools in a delightfully understated way.

In conclusion, Hoem’s *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* is a postmodernist text. This is evidenced by Hoem’s creation of a postmodern fictional zone, his repeated frame breaks and narrative short-circuits, the way he problematizes the boundary between fact and fiction, his blend of high and low culture, his revision of Duun’s now traditional work, *Menneske og maktene*, his emphasis of ontological questions over epistemological questions, and his use of historiographic metafiction. In Scandinavia, the 1980s has widely been acknowledged as the postmodern breakthrough (cf. Jansson 16; Røssaak 40). I definitely agree with Røssaak when he writes, “Norge ligger fremdeles langt etter på dette feltet” [Norway is still quite a bit behind in this field] (22), but I do not think Norwegian authors are quite so far behind as Norwegian literary scholars. Ironically, Edvard Hoem published an unmistakably postmodernist novel in 1974, a decade before postmodernism allegedly reached the Nordic countries, and no one in Norway realized it. Not even Mr. Hoem himself.

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