

THE NOVELS OF TOM KRISTENSEN

***Livets Arabesk, En Anden and Hærværk* in their original context**

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(Har De et Formaal med Deres Forfatterskab?)

Ja Det, at gøre Kunsten til en direkte Del af mit Liv –
saa maa mine Ting vel kunne vise en Mands Vej gennem Livet.

Tom Kristensen, 1929.

Abstract
The Novels of Tom Kristensen

The dissertation consists of five chapters. The first contains a brief introduction to Tom Kristensen as a central cultural figure in Denmark in the decade 1920 to 1930. It also contains an explanation of the point of view and method used in the later chapters. It is explained that Kristensen's novels aimed to communicate with the public and that, given this kind of work, it is useful to place it in a "literary communication paradigm" adapted from the analysis of ordinary communication. The paradigm helps to relate the work to the society and culture within which it was written, which in turn help us to a fuller understanding of the work's meaning and significance. The emphasis is therefore very much on the work, but the method leads to accounts of the ideas and emotions of a particular section of Danish society. Such accounts go no further than the requirements for the interpretation of the novels, but they show how the novels lead into and clarify aspects of social, political and cultural life otherwise hidden.

It is suggested that Kristensen first used art as a means of exploring and simultaneously sheltering from the crises and brutality experienced throughout Europe in the immediate post-1918 period, (in *Livets Arabesk*, 1921). Kristensen's "use" of his art is compared with contemporary attitudes and beliefs about the artist's social situation and purpose, and Kristensen is related to the contemporary scene. The contextualisation of the second novel (*En Anden*, 1923) serves above all to relate its epistemological content to an important debate running through contemporary philosophical and critical discussion. The analysis serves to draw out the authorial attitudes and these are given a particular political significance in the described context. The chapter on *Hærværk* attempts to show how Kristensen's critical and artistic attitudes change in the mid-1920's and how these indicate a change in political alignment. The analysis of the novel itself describes the formal and content patterns in the text and brings these together in a total interpretation of meaning. The account of the novel's context then allows us to assign political significance to the meaning.

The final chapter begins with an account of the conceptual and emotional development and change from novel to novel culminating in the "classic of modern Danish literature", *Hærværk*. As such this chapter makes explicit the links between the preceding three. It also, finally, returns to a point raised in the introductory chapter, the discussion of Tom Kristensen as a typical figure of the post-war decade. A distinction is drawn between a "typical" figure which Kristensen is not, and a "representative" figure which he is. The limitations of his work are then accounted for in terms of his representativeness.

PREFACE

Despite Tom Kristensen's standing in modern Danish literature, it is only recently that his work has come under regular academic study. For a long time Ernst Frandsen's book linking Kristensen and Jacob Paludan, *Aargangen der maatte snuble i starten*, was the only work of any length to go beyond the mere introductory approach. In recent years, first *Hærværk* and then the early poetry have been the object of several scholarly articles and then in 1971, after I had begun my own work, Niels Egebak published his essay, *Tom Kristensen*. I have referred in the notes to points where previous studies are relevant to my own, but in general the dearth of worthwhile work, despite the wealth of newspaper articles appearing over the years, has meant that I have been working very much on my own. To add to this is the fact that my chosen method leads me to areas which others have not considered at great length.

My method of work was inspired by readings in linguistics and I have included the more relevant titles in my bibliography. I have also made specific references in the notes to other language-orientated works of literary criticism, for example to Roland Barthes. The fact remains that I have gradually worked away from and modified my original ideas directly inspired by my original readings, so that I can no longer refer directly to other work, unless I were to explain the now irrelevant process of modification.

In other words the method and the area of work it has caused me to investigate are to some extent original. They are certainly not original with regard to general emphasis, but rather with regard to the degree of development and detail.

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Tom Kristensen.

Tegning af Otto C.

INTRODUCTION

A summary of Tom Kristensen's biography until the publication of *Hærværk*

Tom Kristensen was born in London in 1893, where his family spent five years, although they intended originally to emigrate to the USA. His father, who came from Løgstør, Jutland, worked as a skilled craftsman in ivory and metalwork. His mother also came from Jutland, from Randers, but had grown up in the poorest quarters of Copenhagen.

In 1896, the family returned to Copenhagen where the father opened his own business. He went bankrupt in 1908 and there followed several years of economic incertitude and many moves from one part of the city to another. About 1912, they moved to the suburb Valby and lived in a flat provided by the factory where the father had become overseer.

In 1905, Tom Kristensen moved from the primary school to "Kommunens Belønnings- og Betalings-skole", after being selected by examination. From this school he later won a scholarship place at Henrik Madsens Skole where he passed the Studentereksam and began at the University of Copenhagen in 1911. He studied Danish and English and passed out in 1919, cand.mag. When faced with the practical examination in pedagogics however, he could not carry it through and therefore did not become a qualified teacher. Instead, from 1919 to 1921, he gave lessons in English and Danish at "Købmandsskolen" and "Boghandlermedhjælper-skolen". After acquiring Danish citizenship in 1921, Tom Kristensen journeyed to Munich where three political assassinations had taken place and there was the possibility of open revolution. He published an account of Munich in *Politiken*.

In the winter of 1921-22, after marriage with Ruth Lange, he won an award of a journey to the Far East offered by the Ø.K. Company. He was accompanied by his wife.

In the last years of his university career, Kristensen wrote a considerable amount of poetry, although he had already been writing to some extent for several years. In 1919, one of his friends borrowed a poem and had it published in the satirical magazine *Exlex*. In the early summer of 1920, he published a collection of poetry *Fribytterdrømme* which was followed in the autumn of 1921

by the novel *Livets Arabesk*. In 1922 came the second volume of poetry, *Mirakler*. After his return from the Far East, he wrote, in the summer of 1922, the volume of poetry, *Paafuglefjeren*, which was published that year. He wrote the novel *En Anden* in two months in 1923. About this time he also began his career as a literary reviewer and critic, publishing his first review in *Tilskueren* in May 1923, and then also writing for *Politiken*. Later he became literary editor for *Politiken*.

While maintaining his position as reviewer, Kristensen worked one summer for Knud Rasmussen, as his secretary and adviser. He was to advise Rasmussen in the writing of an account of his journeys and work in the Arctic. In 1925 he spent a summer in Spain, with the intention of writing about the philosopher Raimundo Lullo (1235-1315). The result in fact was the collection of travel impressions and poems *En Kavalier i Spanien* published in 1926. Returning from Spain, he spent some time at the World Exhibition in Paris.

After returning from Spain, he formed a group with the artist Anton Hansen and the author Aksel Sandemose, who called themselves "Frimændene" and hoped to help each other to stop drinking alcohol. They got some publicity and even produced a magazine. About the same period Kristensen abandoned his work for *Politiken* and began to write *Hærværk*. In 1927, he published a further volume of poetry, *Verdslige Sange*.

The publication of *Hærværk* in the autumn of 1930 caused some stir, because of its character of *roman à clef*. In defence of his work, Kristensen obtained permission from Knut Hamsun to publish a letter of considerable praise which the latter had sent after reading *Hærværk*. After the publication of *Hærværk*, Kristensen returned to work for *Politiken*. In the first years of the thirties he publicly turned towards the socialist and marxist camps. This culminated in the publication in 1932 of the talk *Kunst Økonomi Politik* in which he gave a Marxist-inspired critical survey of the 1920s and called on the new generation of writers to become politically engaged in their writing, to break with the "art pour art" conservatism of his own generation.

The critical point of view and method

Tom Kristensen is, with justification, not usually thought of as a novelist. His three novels of interest – excluding *Bokserdrengen* (1925), a children's book, and *Mord i Pantomimeteatret* (1962), a detective story – are only a fraction of his total production of poetry,

criticism, short stories and travel journals. Why then concentrate on just these three novels? We can give three reasons from three different points of view. First, there is the interest of the literary historian for *Hærværk* which is considered to be a "classic" of modern Danish literature and which "grew out" of the two preceding novels *Livets Arabesk* and *En Anden*. With respect to this point of view we shall interpret all three and point out the connections between them. Second, there is the obvious overwhelming importance of the novels for our understanding of their author and the rest of his work, because the novels were products of particular crisis periods in Kristensen's life and as such revealed more completely and profoundly the moving forces in his character and career¹. Thirdly, because Tom Kristensen was closely concerned with the world about him and a self-consciously public figure, the novels are helpful for our understanding of the feel of life in the period and have therefore historical value. The personal crises which the novels reflect were also symptomatic of clashes of feeling and thought in the 1920s.

This last point has particularly occupied the critics so that it has become a banality to say that Kristensen was "typical" of the decade, both in Denmark and in a broader context. Thus we can take a literary historian's view:

Han blev en i videre forstand tidstypisk skikkelse, af holdning på linje med jævnaldrende europæiske og amerikanske forfattere, men dog stærkt knyttet til den hjemlige særdanske tradition i lyrikken.

(Torben Brostrøm in *Dansk Litteratur Historie 4 Politiken* 1966)

Or we can look at a general history:

Tom Kristensen (født 1893) debuterede 1920 med digtsamlingen "Fribytterdrømme". I de følgende års lyrik og i hans romaner ... fornemmes efterkrigstidens

¹ "Jeg skulle jo have undervist, men løb fra pædagogikum. Jeg kunne ikke tænke mig, at jeg nu var færdig med livet. Nu skulle det først erobres, og det kunne jeg ikke tænke mig at gøre fra et kateder. Jeg udgav så *Fribytterdrømme* og romanen *Livets Arabesk*."

("Kunsten udvider det indre rum" *Hjørring Seminarium Årsskrift* 1966)

(Freud: *Det Ubevidste*) overbeviste mig straks om, at det, man glemte, det, man fortrængte, kunne udvikle sig til noget meget farligt (...) At denne bog blev en af tilskyndelserne til, at jeg udarbejdede barndomsskildringen *En Anden* er en kendsgerning.

("I det freudske Klima" : *Den evige Uro* 1958)

"Livet for mig er saadant, at hvert femte Aar eller syvende dukker jeg ned i en Bølgedal, første Gang var min Hærværks-Periode (...)"

("Hvert femte Aar dukker jeg ned i Bølgedal" : *B.T.* 22 June 1939)

dønninger i optagetheden af politiske, æstetiske og livsanskuelsesproblemer.

(*Danmarks Historie* vol 13. p. 298, Politiken)

Yet when Kristensen was once asked whether it had been tiring to be "tidstypisk" his answer shows that this conception of him is not quite accurate:

"Det synes jeg egentlig ikke, men det har været opslidende. Den tid, hvor jeg særlig gav mig af med kunst, var jo i tyverne, da følte jeg mig i en mærkelig både kontakt og også i strid med tiden. Og det sled meget på mig(...)" (May 1962)

(Niels Birger Wamberg: *Samtaler med danske Digtere* 1968)

In the course of our interpretation and assessment of the novels, we shall take account of this view of Kristensen, and we shall attempt to make clearer what lies behind the duality of "kontakt" and "strid". We shall consider how the novels stand in relationship to contemporary experience and thought, i.e. their *significance* as "typical" products of their period, and we shall see what *function* they had for the writer and his public. We shall therefore relate the novels both to the environment in which they were written and to the writer who produced them. Of course, this distinction, though convenient, is false, since the relationships between work, writer and environment go in both directions between and through all three. We have decided to view the novels in this dimension because, given the closeness of subject and tone to the period and the environment, we think this approach will lead most directly and deeply into the novels and the experience and personality they convey.

We also chose this approach because we believed it necessary to view any work as far as possible in its original context, rather than assimilating it directly to our own situation, as if it were written contemporarily with ourselves. This is the necessity of attempting to understand literature as communication and as a communication from a particular person. We must try to understand the person on his own terms, as he wrote for himself and his public at a particular time. It might be objected that to regard literature as communication and in consequence to use insight into other forms of communication in our approach is to assume too much too generally. Without replying to the objection in general, we have nonetheless no hesitation about using the approach with respect to Kristensen's novels. For there is no doubt that he wrote with the aim of publishing, with the aim of communicating something to a particular audience, because he wrote as a professional writer. He has several times remarked that he would have liked to earn his living as a writer and regretted that the smallness of the Danish

literary market prevented him. Of course, his work had other functions besides this economic one - functioning as an organisation and definition of experience - but Kristensen certainly wanted to be part of Danish literature, to be accepted by a public, and to communicate with them against a background of literary tradition and communication.

At this point we need to specify and justify more closely what we shall be seeking in the text and what relationships we shall expect to find relevant to the text.

It is clear enough that most works of literature are susceptible of more than one interpretation. They seem to contain more than one meaning. Without going into the debate of how to discriminate the valid from the invalid interpretation², we need to decide how to arrive at the meaning which interests us: the meaning of the texts for Tom Kristensen in the 1920s. In fact, the several meanings of a piece of literature are as much a product of the context in which and from which it is viewed as of the potential of the text itself. Therefore we obviously have to relate Kristensen's texts to their 1920s context in order to decide on their meaning - even before we worry about questions of significance and function.

We are also encouraged to do this by linguists, whose accounts of semantics show that the meaning of any utterance is partly constituted by factors in the context and situation within which the utterance occurs. By situation we mean more than the physical and immediate world surrounding speaker and hearer or writer and reader, for an utterance can usually be only fully understood if the two parties engaged share a considerable amount of knowledge and awareness of the society and culture in which they are communicating. Furthermore the speaker's preconceptions about his hearer will influence the mode of his communication - for example, in the degree of explicitness he feels is necessary for him to be properly understood. On the other hand the actual meanings gathered from the utterances by the hearer will depend to some extent on what he expects of the speaker, that is on the speaker's identity in the eyes of the particular hearer. Within the utterance, the hearer's understanding of the meanings of words or groups of words will depend first on his experience of their accepted use in his contemporary language-defined social group, and second on the connotations which they have gathered from contemporary use. With the passing of time all of these factors can change and anyone

² E.D.Hirsch argues very convincingly that the only valid interpretation in a practical sense is one which tries to reconstruct the author's original meaning, what he calls a "re-cognitive interpretation".
(*Validity in Interpretation* Yale U.P. 1967 p.27)

who wishes to understand the original meaning must attempt to reconstruct the essential aspects of the original situation.

Now, many of these considerations can usefully be applied to the kind of literature which aims to communicate, like Kristensen's work. We need to know something about the writer's view of himself, what he expected of his public, what people he identified with, what ideas he sympathised with. There is no point in reconstructing the whole of the social and linguistic context, but only those aspects which have bearing on the author and his work. He has, as it were, chosen certain factors from the whole range of life available to him and because he may well feel the isolation of his text even from the immediate context, he will tend to make his choice more or less explicit in his work. His work will perhaps thus also reveal the details of his choice to himself for the first time. From the interpreter's point of view, too, the explicitness of the text will help in identifying the choices the author has made. We can also supplement this first by getting to know the potentially relevant context as well as possible, and second with hints from the writer himself.

There are however two points where the ordinary communication paradigm has to be seriously modified for literature. First, although there are conventions and genres which determine the forms of ordinary communication, those which are embodied in the revered literature of a particular culture are probably more strictly developed and consciously observed by writers and readers. A work of literature relates itself more or less explicitly to the tradition preceding it and gains a certain significance through this relationship. Formal innovation, as in *En Anden* and *Hærværk*, may signify an attempt on the part of the author to draw attention to himself as a literary man or to the novelty of what he has to say. For example, the split chapters of *En Anden* are due to the novelty of Freudian discoveries. The second point is that a literary work has no referential dimension to an immediate situation. Although the work usually refers in general to the physical world in which we live, and the realistic novel uses references to particular times and places, there is no possibility in the reading situation of clarifying meanings by ostensive or any other kind of definition. The author and his reader cannot discuss their understanding of meanings but must rely on tradition and convention. This means, first, that we must try to re-establish the conventional meanings of the author's age. It also means that we must rely more heavily than ever on the linguistic content, on the patterns of meaning built up within the text in question, for an understanding of the author's meanings. He may simply transpose conventional meanings or he may feel that they do not fully cover his needs and that he must attempt to

redefine words and phrases, for example with the help of more or less consciously patterned connotations within his text.

Whether there is a question of redefinition or not, connotations exist and are formed in the course of communication in literature just as in ordinary communication³. Connotations also form between the text and accepted contemporary usage. We can establish an approximation of the latter from other texts - literary and non-literary. The writer may be more or less conscious of these connotations too and may use them openly in his text. They exist however irrespective of the writer and bring the text in question into definite relationships of similarity or contrast with other contemporary texts, ideas and their authors. Where external connotations are alluded to in the text, (for example, Kristensen alludes to the political dimension of the concept of "reality" in *Hærværk*) they are strictly part of the writer's meaning which simultaneously points to the meaning's significance with respect to contemporary ideas and attitudes. Where the writer does not use external connotations, it is best to consider these solely as indicators of the text's relationship to contemporary attitudes, a relationship which exists whether the author wills it and uses it or not, (for example, the conception of the ego as the only criterion for evaluation of experience which is basic to *En Anden* has definite political significance which is not hinted at in the text).

The discussion of connotations has led us to begin to distinguish between meaning and significance. Meaning is internal to the work, though in part constituted by external factors. The work's significance, on the other hand, is a result of its relationships to other texts and the ideas they express. Significance is external to the text and its meaning. We can talk about the meaning's significance⁴. The comparison which constitutes significance might be based on any combination of aspects of the text - aesthetic properties, for example, or characters' psychology, or fidelity to genre tradition. In discussing Kristensen's work, we shall base a comparison on epistemological and ideological factors and compare these with his contemporaries' various attitudes to and interpretations of the world around them. In a sense, it would be as fruitful to base our comparison on formal, generic analysis, since all

³ Roland Barthes has in his *S/Z* (Paris 1970) made a systematic study of inter-textual connotations and their importance in interpretation.

⁴ Hirsch (cf. note 2) also distinguishes between meaning and significance, but he does not consider the importance of both kinds of connotation and their effect on interpretation. For him significance is a question of critical standpoint: relating the text's meaning to some larger whole is a means of evaluating and criticising. For us, establishing significance is part of the process of exegesis.

three novels brought some degree of innovation in Danish literature, from the Dickensian and filmic qualities of *Livets Arabesk* to the Freud-influenced split chapters of *En Anden*, to the Joycean techniques of *Hærværk*. In this respect Kristensen was certainly not typical of 1920s literature; Paludan's more traditional form, especially in *Jørgen Stein*, might be more aptly called "typical". On the other hand, it is obvious that those who have called Kristensen "typical" were thinking of the content and tone of his work, and this is where comparison of attitudes and ideologies will help us to examine just in how far he was "typical". We shall as a result see that because he passed through several moods and eventually converted from a sceptical to an engaged political standpoint, he *represents* many aspects of the twenties. On the other hand he is not a truly typical figure precisely because he did not follow unwaveringly any one line of development, as did most of his contemporaries. However, we shall return to the nuances of this later. The important point here is to emphasise that the particular significance we shall pay attention to is one of several possibilities, and is chosen with the purpose of examining the accepted view that Kristensen was a typical figure of his age, and with the hope that it will throw light on the writer and his work.

Finally, because part of our interest in the novels is in what they can tell us about Kristensen himself and his particular view of his world, we shall consider one other slightly different significance-relationship. We shall try to establish their significance or function for Kristensen personally and the function he hoped they would have for his public. The second function may or may not coincide with how contemporary readers did in fact "use" the novels, and here is a whole field of possible studies of how different people or different groups of people react and use different kinds of literature. We shall however concentrate on "function" seen from the writer's point of view because we want to know more about Kristensen and his response to his environment. The concept of response covers what we find in the text, but it also includes the conception of the text as an act of communication. For communication is among other things a social act, a contribution to social reality, which gives the writer a role in society, or justifies the role he has adopted anyway. More exactly, the contribution will probably include the presentation of certain attitudes to or discoveries about contemporary life, they offer something which entertains or educates its public, and so on. These functions as the writer sees them and as we can to some extent conjecture them from the text's tone and content, are probably related in very complex ways to the functions of the text for the writer personally. The work may justify the writer to himself in his way of life, may help him to recognise and organise his experience, may even be his means of economic survival, or he may

think of it entirely as something about and directed towards other people. In our study of Kristensen, we shall see that it is easier to adduce evidence and conjecture about the function of the novels for himself than to know what he felt they should do for others.

In summary, our purpose will be to interpret the three novels in question with the help of an approach suggested by study of ordinary linguistic communication. Reconstruction of as much as possible of the original meaning is the key concept. The interpretations will help us to understand the author and his relationship to his work and the world around, and when related to the beliefs and ideas of his contemporaries, the interpretations will help us to decide in how far Kristensen is a "typical" figure of his age. We hope thus to shed more light on some central work and the literary personality of an acknowledged key figure of modern Danish literature, while demonstrating a particular interpretative method.

Tom Kristensen om Fremtidens Digtning.

En ung, blig Mand med et Par stærke, staalskinnende Øjne og med lange, kantede, men ikke kejtede Bæneglaser, sidder foran mig. Det er Digteren Tom Kristensen, Forfatteren til "de skønne „Fribyttersange“ og den slet ikke skønne og meget umstridte, men mere end lovende Roman: Livets Arabesk. Han bærer „Kaldets“ rundglassede Brilller og ligner ellers en forlæst og underordnet Student.

— Hvad vil De med Deres Bøger?



Tom Kristensen ser paa mig uden Smil men med et Udtryk af mild Veneration:

— Bønnelycke og jeg, vi har fulgtes ad fra vi var Drengene, siger han.

Jeg har slet ikke Tidens Form for Livs- og Lysthunger. Jeg tror nærmest, at det, jeg har set som Barn og som ung —

— Hvor gammel er De?

— Otte og tyve Aar at det har fyldt mig med en undrende Lede. Jeg har set, hvor Menneskene kan gøre Kærlighedslivet, det erotiske Liv — uandeligt. Jeg har set La- sten, men jeg vil kun se den.

— Bestemmer man selv det?

— Der er dem, som fødes i den, de ved ikke andet for de kan ikke se den, men det kan baade De og jeg, og derfor kan vi vælge. Jeg har lært at se Livet saa brutalt, som det er, og som den Artist, jeg er, er jeg gaaet blankt igennem det. I Proletarkvarteret saa man paa mig, som paa en Fremmed; jeg blev regnet for noget andet straks fra Lille, det har vel ogsaa sat sit Spor i mit Sind.

— De er Student?

— Ja, cand. mag. Men jeg ved ikke, om jeg vil benytte min Eksamen. Foreløbig vil jeg rejse til Østen. Ikke for at skrive. Det har Seedorff udnyttet. Men jeg har en medfødt Sans for Tropernes Farvedrømme, og den vil jeg enten have bekræftet eller slaaet ned — men af mig selv; jeg behøver ingen fremmed Hjælp. Der er noget i mig, som jeg længes efter at faa løftet op, der er Længsler i mig. Jeg er ikke Realist. Det er vi ikke.

— Vi — hvem?

— Bønnelycke og jeg.

— Er De Fremtiden?

LIVETS ARABESK

Introduction

The literary scene

It has often enough being pointed out that the years roughly 1917 to 1922 were financially advantageous for many Danish writers and in particular for a new generation of lyricists who published many volumes of poetry and several novels. It is unfortunate that this generation has been called the "Expressionists" because they had little contact with the original German movement, and there is but little in their writings which could be properly called Expressionist. The little there is, is rather the result of their trying to live up to their mysteriously acquired name. However the label has stuck and we can use it for convenience sake to designate the group which had its identity from its economic success in the main, and also from a feeling of being part of the post-war "new age". Identity of style and subject matter or any other literary criterion was less significant.

Kristensen was a central figure in the group even though he did not publish until very late: the first poems in 1919, the first volume in 1920 and *Livets Arabesk* 1921. He was a close friend of Emil Bønnelycke who was probably the best publicly known figure and the most saleable. Kristensen has often told of the group of students and intellectuals which met in Valby, where he and Bønnelycke felt most at home, (e.g. *Aabenhjertige Fortielser* p.87 ff.). He had most in common with Bønnelycke and shared many of his opinions on literature, and much of his self-confidence. In an interview in 1921 (*B.T.* 29 Nov.), Kristensen said: "Vi tror paa os selv, derude i Valby, Bønnelycke og jeg, jo vi gør". In a speech in 1922, Bønnelycke was more explicit:

Med alt dette liv, denne Livsudfoldelse, dette nye Verdens, de nye Vilkaars differentierede Omfang og den dermed følgende Omvæltning i det menneskelige Hjerte, Sønderknusingen, den sjælelig Pulverisering og Støbningen af det nye Menneske, maa vi tilstaa for os selv, at Tiden nu er en anden end før, at vi staar midt i en ny Tid. ... Nu er det, vi skal vise, hvad vi duer til. Nu er det, vi skal gaa den strenge Vej til Skønhed, til Aand og Evnens Flid, til Guddommen i vort Hjerte, til Sangene i vort Sind, til det store Livsspil i vor Tanke. Derfor er Tiden, trods alt, en lykkelig Tid.

("Litteraturens Udvikling" *Politiken* 19 Nov. 1922)

This speech contained the spirit of the "new age" which we shall see was widespread, and the mode of thought we shall find again in the theories behind the magazine *Klingen*. Through Bønnelycke, Kristensen also came into contact with the group which will go on to publish *Klingen*, an important influence first on contemporary painters and then on many of their contemporary writers and intellectuals. They believed that *the* beauty created in art has social and political significance as a means of understanding and responding to the chaotic situation of post-war Europe. Bønnelycke embodied this optimistic spirit in his novel *Aurora*:

I Løbet af de hede Middagstimer var Innocent blevet forstyret i sin Andagts Glæde af adskillige Mennesker, der havde den Ting fælles, at Livet var dem værdiløst. Livet var meningsløst, sagde de. Tomt. Uforstaaeligt. Hvorfor levede de? Hvorfor led de? Med deres stærke Modtagelighed for alt hæsligt, deres Afsky for alt plump og simpelt, deres Angst for alt brutalt, deres Sorg ved Synet af megen Ulykke, mindedes ingen af dem i uendelige Tider at havde set noget smukt. De længtes efter Fred, Hvile, Skønhed. Til dem alle havde Innocent sagt: - Jeg skal vise Dem noget smukt -

(E. Bønnelycke: *Aurora* 1920 chap 5 p. 39)

The reality to which they all return from the dream they share with Innocent is more acceptable for them because of their having experienced something beautiful.

We shall find something of this trust in beauty in *Livets Arabesk*, but it is important to remember that Kristensen in the cited interview calls Bønnelycke an optimist and himself a sceptic. There were optimistic and pessimistic responses to this sense of the world's chaos.

Being a student at the University, Kristensen was also more loosely connected with other groups within his generation. He and Bønnelycke contributed to *Nye Tanker*, the literary and political magazine published by radicals and republicans, and he took part in the revival of the radical Studentersamfund. He also had some connection with a slightly younger group of students who published an "apolitical", literary magazine, *Klinte*. These people tried consciously to cut themselves off from pre-war generations of writers, as both Kristensen and Bønnelycke did:

Krigen blev Skelsætterten. ...

Tyvernes Digtere!

Med dem mener jeg de Digtere, der turde se Krigen i Øjnene. Der alligevel ikke – som Loths tragiske Hustru – stivnede ved Synet, men vendte Ryggen til, gik

fremefter med Synet af Tomten i deres Øjne, - bestemt til at vandre under dens Lov. (...) Frederik Nygaard er en saadan Dreng. Thuborg, Bruun-Rasmussen, Vejrup, Buchholtz, Børup, Vibe, Tom Christensen (sic), Anton Nielsen, Seedorf.

(Johs. Weltzer in *Klinte* I, 2 Nov 1920)

These people however followed a doctrine of "l'art pour l'art" which tried to cut itself off from social and political questions. We shall see that though later commentators, including Kristensen himself, have tried to classify him under this label, it is not an adequate account of his work, particularly of *Livets Arabesk*⁵.

"Chaos" and "the new age" in post-war Denmark.

Livets Arabesk is a novel which does not refer explicitly to a particular geographical location. It does not use historical events to place itself in time. In these aspects, the novel differs from many works in the realist tradition, but the difference is more apparent than real. In its implicit references, the time, place and event, the novel draws in fact on the reader's familiarity with the life of a certain place, Copenhagen, at a certain time, the years immediately after the World War. Moreover, the novel goes further than many in the degree it relies upon well-developed familiarity with the ideas and fashions of the period and place in question. For it claims to be in part an analysis of the fundamental character of certain well-known social movements and philosophies.

Our first task in understanding *Livets Arabesk* will be then to make explicit as much as necessary and possible of the familiarity which the novel assumes. To do this, we shall draw on contemporary newspapers, magazines and so on, and shall build up around the text a *partial* view of its contemporary society and intellectual life. We shall see the society, or part of it, *through* the novel; this is a

⁵ The label "l'art pour l'art" tends to cause confusion, because it was introduced retrospectively as a derogatory term. In the beginning of *Klingen* it was used as a rallying point for a new movement in painting. As *Klingen* spread its interests to other art forms, with the introduction of new members to the regular writing staff, the slogan was modified. Otto Gelsted, following Herbert Iversen, introduced a political dimension to the pursuit of beauty for its own sake. This will be explained later. By 1922, however, Bønnelycke in the cited speech was rejecting "l'art pour l'art" and calling for "l'art pour la vie", perhaps as a reaction to the one-sided response of the *Klinte*-group. The essence of his thought however does not deviate from Gelsted's theorising. From this time, 1922, the label was used exclusively derogatively.

(cf. further details in note 40 on *En Anden*)

conscious bias and acceptance of the novel's own terms. Simultaneously, we shall begin to see with what kind of existing biased view the novel identifies itself: when it approaches or deviates from widely held opinions or the opinions of self-conscious minority groups about the social movements and moral and philosophical standpoints it analyses.

Baumann anede, at han måtte gøre revolutionen med, at kaos var udtrykket for hans verden, at kaos måske ville betyde en udløsning, en befrielse for ham.

(*Livets Arabesk*, II, 5)

The key word here, chaos, is an abbreviation for one of the central conceptions in *Livets Arabesk*. The novel is a study of various responses to a collapsing world. In Denmark in the years immediately following "the World War", which, it seemed, had been civilisation's catastrophe never to be repeated, the world and Europe at its centre seemed truly chaotic. For us, chaos has become familiar and has lost much of its meaning. Chaos is presented to us every day through news media and has become part of the reality in which we live. Some 50 years ago, it was new, thrust suddenly and without warning into a former peace by growing news media⁶.

The war had been waged by neighbouring powers but at a safe distance, in France, in the east. It was brought near by the daily newspaper, which provided a spectator experience, often coloured by the hope of profiteering. There were enthusiasms for one 'side' or the other. The brutality of the 'game' was occasionally perceived through reports from the front, through the surge of war literature such as Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu*, but this remained necessarily an experience on paper, at the distance afforded by literature.

Although in the first instance arising out of the conclusions of war, the revolution was new and different. It had a contrasting swiftness of movement; it spread bloodily to Finland, to the 'Danish' town of Flensburg in Germany, and became a political, agitational force in Sweden and Norway, and ultimately in Denmark. Whereas war was a known process, revolution was a young, unfamiliar movement. Bolshevism was compared with a contemporary epidemic illness - "den spankse syge". Where attempts were made to understand, they were often no more than lists of superficial events and apparent causes in particular countries. Thus it did not seem possible to envisage Bolshevism's independent generation or permanent spreading to other areas where conditions seemed

⁶ I Tiaaret 1910-1920 fordobler en Række Blade deres Omsætning; Holdertallet stiger stærkt under Krigen, fordi Læslysten vokser - man holder nu kun sjældent Avisen i Fællesskab; Annonceindtægterne øges. men det gør Udgifterne ogsaa(...)
(Svend Thorsen: *Den danske Dagspresse* 1947 vol I p. 222)

different and unfavourable. There seemed to be no danger in Western Europe and Denmark.

Yet Germany heaved with revolution and for a moment revolution seemed possible in Copenhagen itself. The apparent *coup d'état* by the King at Easter 1920, whatever its cause, seemed to some an opportunity to follow the example of many other countries. The revolution was proclaimed, but failed. (*Livets Arabesk* forecasts what would happen if the revolution had succeeded.) When all was unsuccessfully past, the most efficient and anti-revolutionary interpretation of events was to give them some other name and dismiss them as trivial. *Berlingske Tidende* wrote of "de alvorlige Bøllespektakler", caused by "de 10-12000 unge Mennesker, som bestod af Kasketdreng og Nytaarsbøller". In *Livets Arabesk*, the same atmosphere is created by Baumann's using the term "Kasketdreng" of the figures he sees in the popular parts of the town, and very clearly, the revolutionaries' storming of the palace in *Livets Arabesk* evokes memories of the procession to Amalienborg during the Easter crisis, and the Syndicalists' hopes of dethroning the King.

After the war, Europe even with the help of America, did not seem able to control its chaotic self. The hope, personified by President Wilson, of a peace as grave as the war which had preceded and prepared it, was not fulfilled. In 1921, Anatole France's speech, at the ceremony of acceptance of his Nobel Prize, seemed to express many people's feelings: the war had solved nothing:

Den frygteliste af alle Krige er blevet fulgt af en
Fredstraktat, der ikke er nogen Fredstraktat, men er
Forlængelse af Krigen. Europa vil forgaa, hvis ikke
Fornuften omsider faar Plads i Staternes Raad.
(*Politiken* 12 Dec 1921)

Earlier that year, Kristensen had placed himself publicly in the ranks of those who were disgusted with the present situation. He recited his specially prepared *Chaos er Verden* to the members of Studentersamfundet (8 Oct 1921). It is like a list. There are references to the arguments over Upper Silesia, to revolution in Bavaria, to a war between Austria and Hungary, to famine in Russia, to rebellion in India, to nine million workless in USA, to disturbances in Egypt, to rebellion in Morocco, to war between Turks and Greeks in Asia Minor and much more:

Det, der er Virvar i denne Verden, er saa omfattende,
saa endeløst, det strækker sine Armer ud over all Dele af
Jordkloden.

In Denmark, joy over the reunification with Nordslesvig overrode mistrust of the peace. Georg Brandes, speaking probably for a minority, warned against blind acceptance of peace, against what was happening outside Denmark, against the re-emergence of narrow-minded nationalism. The desire for peace outweighed such warnings and the chauvinist joy of re-unification, the rise of "Scandinavianism", seemed to be exempt from criticism for most people. *Livets Arabesk* however is sharply derisive of nationalist fervour. There is a measure of irony in the description of Walther Stang's swift rise to the status of "en stor national skjald" (Epilog).

Kristensen's generation as a whole was more active than their elders in publicising their beliefs and criticisms. The plurality and variety of these were reflected in the surge of new periodicals. (Increasing general economic difficulties in the early 20s however soon led to the fall of most of them.) *Nye Tanker*, campaigning in the name of the young, wanted Denmark to follow the example of many other countries where emperors and kings were being deposed. It proclaimed the Republic. *Dagen og Vejen* criticised even the young for being bound to Danish thinking and blind to Europe. *Kværnen* called for a return to reason, to find help in the past. *Klingen* ignored the narrowly political and sought to create uncommitted art out of the surrounding chaos. All these periodicals, despite their differences, agree in using the concepts of chaos and newness to view the contemporary world. Chaos is a term which can be interpreted pessimistically or optimistically, as an end or as a beginning. Often, the world is described as chaotic and yet hope in the "new age" is expressed. Almost too automatically that hope is attached to "the young", to whom "the old" appeal and pass on the responsibility for the future⁷. An illustration from *Studententer-*

⁷ Examples:

... denne bevægede Aften ... som sammentrængt i et Par korte Timer gav os et lille Indtryk af det vældige Kaos, hvoraf den nye Tid gror frem og efterhaanden vil faa Form.

("Ekspressionisternes Aften" : *Politiken* 5. Feb 1919)

Hvis det vil lykkes mig at overbevise Dem om, mine Damer og Herrer, ud fra min simple Følelse som Menneske og skrivende Mand, at vi oplever og lever i en ny Tid, da skal jeg bagefter forsøge at sætte Grænseskellet mellem gammelt og nyt, at paapege Modsætnings-forholdet mellem en gammel Literatur og Symptomerne paa en paaviselig ny og oprindelig Digtning, der forhaabentlig bliver Tidens og Fremtidens (...)

(Emil Bønnelycke "Litteraturens Udvikling" *Politiken* 19 Nov. 1922)

samfundets Rusmodtagelse in 1921 gathers significance from the particular occasion:

Vi stod passive som Tilskuere under Krigen, men nu er vi aktivt med i den Omvaltningsproces, der foregaar med Samfund og Folkeracer, tydeligst i den økonomiske Krise, som har tilintetgjort talrige Forhaabninger, men lige saa stærkt i den aandelige Krise, der gærer, og som har Bud i første Række til Landets Ungdom (...) Det Fredsværk, der udført i Paris, (...) er gennemsyret af en giftig Aand, og derfor nedbrydende mere end opbyggende (...) Imidlertid staar vi først ved Begyndelsen til den nye Tid, og det er muligt, at efterhaanden større Ro og Klarhed kan vindes.

(Carl Thalbitzer: "Politisk Solformørkelse." *Politiken* 5 Sep 1921)

An illustration from the first number of the periodical *Rød Ungdom - Organ for Danmarks socialdemokratisk Ungdom*, indicates how some people wanted to turn the new atmosphere to the advantage of practical politics. The periodical appealed for "en Ungdomsbevægelse – ikke paa Papiret, men en virkelig Ungdomsbevægelse", which, it was claimed, was a contrast with other sections of the young generation, "den haabløse Ungdom". The use of quotation marks tells us that such people were readily identifiable and familiar to the public:

"Den haabløse Ungdom" maa for os gerne optræde som Kunstmalere og uddele "pæne Farver" her og der. Ak, det vilde være en stor Synd at berøve dem den Glæde ...
(*Den røde Ungdom* 7 March 1920)

Much later, in *Aabenhjertige Fortielser*, Kristensen justifies the label given him and his fellows, "den haabløse Ungdom":

Midt i virkelighedens mørke livssyn, hvor tilværelsens 'vage værdier' sådanne som for eksempel 'retfærdighed' og 'trofasthed' kunne sygne hen ...

This description is related to what we called the pessimistic interpretation of chaos. The cliché-like label in *Rød Ungdom* indicates that pessimism was consciously exercised, was a conscious attitude. Again we find some justification in a passage from *Aabenhjertige Fortielser*, where Kristensen describes his tutors in philosophy:

Jeg hører til dem, der tror paa en ny Tid efter Ragnarok.
(Richard Bryde "Den litterære Misere i Danmark" *Litteraturen* 3 p. 379)

The last example is probably a conscious allusion to Ove Rode's famous "Gimle"-speech, in which, still in war-time, he prophesied a new, brighter future in the peace which must eventually come.

Anton Thomsens og frøken Krarups undervisning løb naturligvis parallelt. Den var sikkert mere værdinihilistisk, end professorerne på Universitetet holdt af. Viljens frihed var noget snak. Livet havde ikke anden mening end den, menneskene selv lagde i den. Mening var et begreb, menneskene selv havde fundet på. Moral kunne ikke videnskabeligt begrundes. Der var kun Kants kategoriske imperativ, som jeg personligt havde lyst til at forkaste.

(*Aabenhjertige Fortællelser* p.75)

Kristensen is here talking of pre-war teaching and this supports what some critics have pointed out, that the breakdown of morals and ideals was not caused by the war⁸. For our purposes however it is important that in the post-war period, the war appeared to be identical with and the cause of the collapse of civilisation. This superficial view then attributed the breakdown of morality and many other ills to the effect of war. At a popular level, concern over the moral education of the young sprang from the menace of

⁸ Kristensen also mentions his philosophy tutor in an interview ("Kunsten som udvider det indre rum": *Hjørring Seminarium Årsskrift*, 1966), where he mentions that Nietzsche was not as important to him as some people might think. It is interesting to note his attitude by 1929, when he advocated the union of literature with politics, and characterised nihilism as politically conservative; he is reviewing Thomas Dinesen's *No Man's Land*, and remembers him from before the war:

Han var fortrolig med Sagaerne og med Nietzsche, han var moralsk nihilist, hvad man maatte blive under Paavirkning af Førkrigstidens Filosoficum ... Kort sagt, Thomas Dinesen var som enhver ung Æstetiker før det skæbnesvangre Aar 1914, og det giver et Stød af Genkendelsesglæde i hans jævnældrende at træffe den Aand lyslevende igen efter femten mørke, forvirrede Aar, og det vækker en Følelse af Vemod, nu da vi ved, at denne blanke Amoralitet, dette dristige Frisind blot er den radikale Form for Konservatisme.

("Kunst og Politik": *Tilskueren* 1929 II p.358)

Here is more evidence too that the war was only the apparent cause of post-war phenomena.

Finally, Kristensen once quoted Aldous Huxley in order to describe his own youth:

"For mig som for de fleste af mine Samtidige var Meningsløshedens Filosofi væsentligt et Værktøj til Befrielse. Hvad vi længtes efter, var Befrielse fra en bestemt politisk og økonomisk Ordning og fra en bestemt sædelig Ordning. Vi vendte os mod den herskende Moral, fordi den holdt vor seksuelle Moral ned."

Det Citat har givet mig saa meget at tænke paa, at jeg haaber at faa skrevet en Bog om min Tids Ungdom paa Grundlag af det.

("Jeg har valgt at gaa den naive Vej og bare sige: Jeg tror!" *Kristeligt Dagblad* 4 Aug. 1943).

nihilism. In 1920, a competition was started to find a suitable book of morals for school use. In 1921, there was a long debate about a religious foundation for a code of morals.

In the interpretation of *Livets Arabesk*, we shall see that the world and existence are considered meaningless. None of the characters is able to wrest any values or purpose from the chaos of society and the insignificance of his life. Yet the writer sustains one value, that of beauty. We shall ask later how he can cultivate this one value in the face of all meaninglessness. We must ask here how the cultivation of beauty fits into and draws upon contemporary thinking.

Art and life

“Skønheden vil jeg ikke dræbe ved at definere og begrænse. Den er den bitreste sorg, den er råhed, den er den vildeste glæde, den er religiøsitet, den er raffineret uskyld; men den er først og fremmest en evig revolution, og den er roen midt i revolutionen.”
(*Livets Arabesk* II, 4)

An alternative to nihilism was taken up by a number of people connected with the magazine *Klingen*. The alternative was later labelled “l’art pour l’art” and has been assumed to be exclusive to *Klingen*. Two points must be kept in mind. First, the label can only be justified by further definition, which is best found in the magazine itself. Second, any label can be only an approximation of what individuals feel they have in common. Otto Gelsted was a leading theorist in the group and discussed the label more than once. In the following quotation, he is expounding part of Herbert Iversen’s *To Essays on Vor Erkendelse* (1918):

Forstaas Vendingen l’art pour l’art derhen, at hver enkelt Kunstart fremmes bedst ved en hengiven og energisk Drykelse af dens ejendommelige Virkemidler uden Bihensyn og Bihensigter, kan der ikke være noget at indvende mod den. Paa den anden Side: jo renere et Kunstvark er, des stærkere er ogsaa dets Tendens. Der gives en indirekte kunstnerisk Polemik, hvis mestre maaske tør holdes for Menneskehedens allermægtigste og urokkeligste moralske Ledere og Reformator. Det er denne *Eksempels Polemik*, der møder os hos de Kunstnere, som rolig-energisk følger deres egen Smag. Ofte er det den foreløbige Uforstaaelighed af deres Værker, der rusker os op og leder os ind i nye Livsmuligheder.

(Otto Gelsted: "Tre Paastande om Kunst" *Klingen* II, 4)

Because of the assertion in *Livets Arabesk* that beauty is revolutionary, it is important to note here the stress on the active nature of "l'art pour l'art", on the polemic which is inherent in purity of aim and fulfilment⁹. In contrast, the usual interpretation, at which the later derogatory use of the label was aimed, appears in an early number of *Klingen*:

Hvorfor vil vi gøre god Kunst? For at befri os. For Smudset, som er den daarlige Kunst. Kunsten har sin moral, som er - Pragt og Glæde og - Renlighed. Til Glæde for hvem? For Pallas Athene!

('Athos': "Intermezzo" *Klingen* I, 2 1917)

Another passage from Gelsted's work runs closely parallel to Pram's description of beauty in the quotation above:

Det er dog ikke Hensigten at genoptage den ørkesløse Diskussion om Kunst for Kunstens eller Kunst for Livets Skyld. Kunst er en Form for Liv, og har som saadan sit Formaal i sig selv, samtidig med at den i Forhold til Livets Helhed kan ses som Middel.

(Otto Gelsted: *Ekspressionisme* 1919 p.44)

Gelsted identifies the dual nature of art. Art is both self-absorbed and, despite the traditional opposition of 'life' and 'art', it is part of life. Compare this with Pram's description: beauty is both revolution, 'life', and calm in the midst of revolution, the calm of the artist-observer. Pram also asserts that art has a dual nature. The arabesque has beauty and in the novel's title life is described as an

⁹ If we turn directly to Herbert Iversen's *To Essays om vor Erkendelse*, which Gelsted is expounding in this article, we find a defence of l'art pour l'art in so far as it aims at the perfection of the art, but not to the exclusion of all else (p. 279). In his discussion of the non- or trans-artistic functions of art, we find the link of arts and polemic: "den største Polemik åbenbarer sig, efter mit Skøn, netop i den såkaldte reneste kunstneriske Virksomhed"; but we also find a stronger formulation:

En bestemt Kunstners "Smag" er jo noget langt bredere end en såkaldt æstetisk Vurderings-Tendens; det er intet mindre end en hel praktisk Væremåde; og jeg, for mit Vedkommende, vilde i Almindeglighed foreslå, at en hvilkensomhelst Offentliggørelse af et Kunstværk opfattes som en Slags politisk Aktion. (p. 280)

The link of art with politics, political action, is automatic, not chosen, and, as we shall argue, publication implies and requires a belief in the work's power to communicate, that is to persuade; and persuasion is a political act. We suggest in the discussion of *Hærværk* that Kirk reveals that the prejudiced conception of a tendentious art automatically assumes it to be bad art. Perhaps this explains why Gelsted omits Iversen's more severe formulation and equating of literature with political action. Iversen foreshadows later assertions that all art, irrespective of intentions, is tendentious.

arabesque. We shall see later that the title indicates how the novel will be an engagement with art as 'life', and with a vital part of contemporary living, the revolution, as 'art'. Art and life become one.

"Reality"

Og det slog Baumann, at han gik i en gade, i en gade gennem hele tilværelsen og mødte ansigter bag ansigter, hans hustru, Elise, frk. Langebæk, fru Anna. Var virkeligheden så skiftende? Var den så meningsløst springende? Vekslede billederne i Majas slør? Var der ingen ro? Var der ikke anden sammenhæng end den, man selv digtede ind? Var livet kun Majas bølgende slør med de indvævede billeder, der skiftede i en drilagtig evindelighed?
(*Livets Arabesk* I, 7)

The important renewal in Danish painting which took place during and after the war was attacked as insane. The attacker was seriously supported by "experts" in psychiatry. The details of the debate are not important here, but the basic cause was contemporary painters' denial of "naturalist" art, the exact photographic copying of detail - they referred disparagingly to this as "panopticon art". They insisted on the essential importance of the artist's personal experiencing of the world; the subject-matter must pass through and be moulded by this channel before it can reach the canvas¹⁰. Ordinary conceptions of reality were denied validity. They were attacked from another direction too, by Bergson's

¹⁰ Two brief quotations will show how the theory was formulated. It was taken over from French writings, but suitable support was discovered by Gelsted in Iversen's writing. First the French manifesto as it appeared in translation:

Velmenende Kritikere har forklaret Manglen paa Naturalisme i den moderne Malerkunst som udsprunget af en Bestræbelse efter at male Tingene ikke som de viser sig for os, men som de "virkelig er". Men en Ting har aldeles ingen absolut Form. Den Form, de omtalte Kritikere tænker paa, er den geometriske. (...) Hvad vi søger, er *det væsentlige*, men vi søger det ikke in Geometrien - elle i en eller anden Metafysik - men i os selv.

(Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes: "Kubisme" *Klingen* 2, no 4)

And then Gelsted's summary of Iversen's thought:

Det er Kunstnerens Indstilling overfor Tingene, der er det egentlige kunstneriske Emne ... Kunstnerens Virkelighedstroskab ligger i hans Troskab mod sin Oplevelse.
(*Tre Paastande om Kunst* "Klingen" 2, no. 4)

philosophy, which soon became widely known in post-war Denmark. We can feel the novelty and difficulty of Bergson's writings in the following quotation from a popular introductory article:

At det almindelige, godt begavede Menneske til Stadighed skulde forfalske den given Virkelighed, synes utroligt. Og dog paastar Bergson, at vi alle gør det ... af praktiske Grund ... at vi af den Helhedsbevægelse, som Naturen i Virkeligheden er, udskærer isolerede Elementer, der for os bliver den materielle Verden, i hvilken vi til daglig lever.

(Viggo Cavling: "Bergsons *Den rene Bevidsthed*" *Politiken* 17 Jan. 1918)

At about the same time Einstein's work was becoming more widely known outside specialised circles. In 1919, his theories were "proved" correct and consequences were drawn, again at a popularly understandable level. Here was another blow against accepted views of reality:

Einstein viser os, at det ikke alene er Menneskets Tanker og Handlinger, der er rent subjektive, men ogsaa de af Mennesket opfundne Maaleredskaber ... Verden bestaar af en Mængde ind i hinanden gribende Illusioner, den er et kæmpemæssigt Teater, og vi Mennesker er Tilskuerne

...¹¹

And we find the same image, borrowed from Indian philosophy, as appears so importantly in Baumann's experience of reality:

Men det er ikke nok at være passive Tilskuere, vi vil se Teatret som Teaterdirektøren ser det ... Mange er aldrig kommet tilbage til deres Plads, de er blevet kvalt i det, som Inderne kalder Mayas slør.

(Viggo Cavling: "Verden som Illusion" *Politiken* 5 Dec 1919)

The period also saw considerable activity in Danish philosophy. In particular, the publication of Herbert Iversen's *To Essays om vor Erkendelse* (1918) reinforced the imported intellectual challenge to usual thinking about the world of "reality"¹².

We have seen so far how some of the central problems and themes raised in *Livets Arabesk* reflect parts of contemporary social life. The general political situation of Europe and the rest of the world produce the sense of chaos. Denmark balanced on the edge of revolution and *Livets Arabesk* pushes it over. The situation which

¹¹ In 1920, the presence of Einstein in Copenhagen to lecture on his work and, in 1922, the production of a popular film to illustrate the theories and their implications, contributed to a wider awareness and increasing comprehension of the new view of the universe.

¹² I shall discuss Iversen's work more fully in the context of *En Anden*.

the war seemed to have caused was strikingly unknown. For some social groups it presented a promising challenge; something new could be made out of chaos. For others, chaos was an ending.

For the intellectuals, those who feel the situation most strongly through its ideas, and feel the need to come to terms emotionally and intellectually with the challenge, the political and economic chaos is supplemented by new philosophies, the theories of art and science. We have brought together, in particular, some of the theoretical thinking behind *Klingen* and the central theme of the value of beauty in *Livets Arabesk*. *Klingen* was undoubtedly an important influence in intellectual life in Copenhagen between 1917 and 1920; Kristensen mentions, in *Aabenhjertige Fortielser*, its importance for Emil Bønnelycke and himself (p.103f). We shall see how, in *Livets Arabesk*, art becomes a means of reacting to the world, if not of understanding it. Chaos can be subsumed in the world to explain and describe its beauty. This is a desperate solution for those who can find no other promise in the situation. Otto Gelsted describes the desperation:

Vi forklarer os Verden ved Begreber som Postulat, Kausalsammenhæng, Energi. Kunst og Videnskab deler her same Skæbne, vi bevæger os i en Verden af Fiktioner, og det er sandsynligt, at det er fundamentale Fejltagelser i vort Livssyn, der giver vor Tilværelse dens Værdi – paa same Maade som det er en Illusion, at Traerne er grønne og Himlen blaa. Ligesom de Vilde danser deres Soldans for at binde Mørkets Magter og holde Universet oppe, saadan søger vi i Kunsten at besejre de ødelæggende Kræfter og holde Liv i Funktion. (Otto Gelsted: *Ekspressionisme* 1919 p.47)

We have then gradually narrowed the general picture of chaos until we find the conception of it which will be seen to correspond closely with the conception in *Livets Arabesk*. The first step was to see the variety of reactions within differing generations; the second to cast a glance at the variety within the younger generation; the third to consider the challenge to the world of the younger intellectuals and artists. Our steps were directed by what will be found in *Livets Arabesk*. The text thus marked out its own place within post-war intellectual life. Later, we shall examine the detail of its position more closely.

Tom Kristensen and his public

The way in which anyone communicates, his style and mode of expression, depend on what he knows or supposes about his public. Ultimately even the meaning of what he says, for his public, will depend on who they are. In reconstructing the situation in which *Livets Arabesk* was read, we must ask how the readers might have been and what was the relationship of writer, novel and public. What we discover here will then also serve us in subsequent discussions of *En Anden* and *Hærværk*. Kristensen addressed his work to the same public throughout the twenties.

In the case of *Livets Arabesk*, we can postulate the identity of the public to whom the novel is *directly* addressed in terms of the demands inherent in the text. The text has many unexplained references to certain thinkers, their philosophies and theories. It demands, if it is to be completely understood, that the reader be able to make the connections. Its preconceived public is that which can bring this degree of understanding¹³. Contemporary, non-specialised magazines - e.g. *Vor Tid*, *Litteraturen*, *Tilskueren* - and newspaper chronicles frequently contained articles on the kind of moral, philosophical and social questions which are treated or mentioned in *Livets Arabesk*. The novel makes allusions to mechanism, to Maja, the questioning the identity of the self, to problems of moral justification of action, to revolutionary theory. More generally, *Livets Arabesk* requires familiarity with political and economic events in Europe and Russia. The novel's public has to consist of people with considerable formal education, with time and inclination to go beyond the newspaper headlines, to more lengthy treatment of contemporary problems and ideas. This points to the educated bourgeoisie and to intellectuals, who enjoyed a similar social position. Yet *Livets Arabesk* contains attacks on Baumann, Pram and their fellows, who represent precisely such a public. They are rejected as beyond hope of lasting conversion to the novel's creed, the cultivation of art and revolution.

¹³ This conception is similar to but not identical with Sven Møller Kristensen's "primary public":

De mennesker, som nu dels vilde have reageret overfor samme oplevelse, og dels forbinder ordene og formerne med samme associationer som digteren, de vil umiddelbart og helt forstaa hans værk.

(*Digteren og Samfundet* 1 1942 p.12)

The difference is that I am not concerned with that completeness of apprehension which would appear to require identification with the writer, but rather with the conditions for an understanding of the language or mode of communication; the apprehension of the meaning is subsequent to those conditions.

In 1924, Henning Kehler looked back at the literature of the preceding years, and made a biting point:

Sagen for deres Vedkommende er i de fleste Tilfælde, at de foragter Publikum lige saa kraftigt, som de tilbeder det ... Sagen er ogsaa den: man er Demokrat, endogsaa Proletar ... med Haanden for Brystet: Massernes Søn, Pelle Eroberen i Litteraturen ... og man er alligevel Adelsmand, oh, saa ædel, og enestaaende, oh saa fin og ejendommelig og sjælden. Man er baade – og. Og man har ikke fundet sine egne Ben.

(“Faldet i det tomme Rum” in *Kampen om Livsanskuelse* 1925 p.113)

This is undoubtedly part of the truth. Another part is reflected in Bønnelycke’s attempt to renew Brandes’ famous words, applied now to the new literature:

Der findes ikke det Menneske, ikke det brændende Spørgsmaal, ikke den livsmæssige Handling, der er et Udtryk for Menneskeskæbner, som det ny Digtning ikke vil optage til Debat.

(E. Bønnelycke: “Litteraturens Udvikling” *Politiken* 19 Nov. 1922)

Livets Arabesk describes then dismisses existing modes of thought and living. In describing them through and in their own terms, the novel inevitably addresses itself to those people whom it eventually dismisses. The reasons for using their own terms may be that the writer knows no others, or that he feels this is the only adequate way. The question arises how the writer can expect understanding from the people he dismisses. Whom does he hope to persuade? We must also ask how he can understand and yet feel he is independent and different? We are helped towards the answers by Johannes Weltzer, who in his *De usandsynlige Hverdage* (1953) describes how Kristensen wrote *Livets Arabesk* at a table in a student café. Despite having officially left the university, Kristensen still kept contact with student life. It is here, among people who understand, yet believe they can live outside existing cultural beliefs, that Kristensen could expect to find his “primary public”¹⁴, their sympathy with his aims as well as understanding of his language and ideas. This suggestion is supported by the enthusiastic review by a member of Kristensen’s generation, Peter Christiansen, in *Tilskueren*. He finishes in the following way:

Den mand som har skrevet “Livets Arabesk”, er mærket af krigen og revolutionen, og han er mærket kræftigere, intensere, dybere og mere ægte, end nogen af de andre skribenter, begivenhedernes tryk har fået til at springe i

¹⁴ This term is borrowed from Møller Kristensen (see above note 13).

blomst. Han er vor første, store, særpregede digter, som verdenskatastrofen har skabt. Er det ikke nokså vigtigt, og nokså glædeligt?
("Tom Kristensen" *Tilskueren* 1921, II, p.434)

Other reviews, mainly by the older generation, were not so generous. Their predictions that the novel's attacks on existing life and ideas would not be taken seriously are confirmed in a later account:

man indsaar dens ufarlighed som samfundssatire.
(Kjel Elfelt, *Den lykkelige Flugt* 1925 p.13)

These critics often reproached the novel for being unreal. It is significant that Kristensen's near-contemporary, Henning Kehler, who had had personal experience of the revolution in Russia, also castigated *Livets Arabesk* for its unreality, ("Kaos og Literatur" in *Kronik og Kritik* 1922). The implication of these criticisms is that this is a young, inexperienced man's book, which would have benefited from confrontation with natural catastrophe and revolution. This is an important misunderstanding which will be seen to contrast with one of the meanings and functions of the novel, which contains an attempt to overcome precisely this lack of experience, which Kristensen and others were only too conscious of. And here again, the writer can only expect complete sympathy from students and intellectuals of the younger generation, his primary public.

Analysis of the text

We have so far discussed aspects of the context in which *Livets Arabesk* was written and offered to a public. This entailed a selection of relevant detail which was based on what will be emphasised in the following discussion of the text. There was anticipation of the elements which will be seen to justify the selection and whose significance will become clearer in the light of the anticipatory selection. Moreover, discussion of the novel will centre on certain aspects, selected from the whole texture. These are aspects whose importance is partly their predominance in the text and partly their implicit relationship to the context. Selection in context and selection in text will justify and clarify each other.

Let us first clear away things which will not be considered, and explain why, seen purely from a reader's aesthetic viewpoint, *Livets Arabesk* is unsatisfactory. It is a novel with many facets, but it is unable to hold them in a complex whole. It is complicated and loose. There is incomplete or improbable characterisation e.g. Brommand, Bang; irrelevant symbolism e.g. the dark-light

relationship of the two reporters, Myrgaard and Severinsen; perfunctory experimentation in technique, e.g. the repetition of a sentence at the beginning of chapters four and five in part one, as a means of connecting them, or the parallel openings of chapters six and seven, where Ibal and then Baumann return to consciousness - the parallel, which intends to make a connection between them, is not carried consistently through. There are many interesting and pleasing individual passages and observations - of the colours and shadows in the scene, of minor characterisation, and so on - but they do not form a satisfactory whole. Of course, we do not want to conceal our dissatisfaction with *Livets Arabesk*, for even in an attempt to understand the writer and his novel on his own terms we feel offended by the aesthetic failings. To criticise these faults however would be attacking a straw man, when Kristensen himself has dismissed *Livets Arabesk* as immature. We shall concentrate on trying to understand what the text contains despite its faults.

"Reality" and existence

We have seen how new theories in painting, theories of relativity, and philosophical speculation were challenging the solidity of reality. *Livets Arabesk* takes up the implications in the descriptions of a particular person experiencing what it means to "exist" in a "real world". We are most often led into the internal sensations of Baumann's world and allowed only occasional glimpses into the other three main characters, Johannes, Ibal, Pram. Yet we are led to believe that his feelings are typical and commonly valid, that there is a basic divide between an inner personal world and an outer, shared reality. This same division reappears in *En Anden* and *Hærværk*. In all three novels, the division is acknowledged and accepted, its existence never challenged, and none of the characters involved, Baumann, Rasmussen, Jastrau, lives in a meaningfully whole world, a world where the opposition is removed. They all try to overcome the division, to enjoy both the inner and outer worlds of experience, even though a basic supposition of Kristensen's thinking about experience is that such attempts are vain. The characters swing from one world to the other and cannot fuse the two. We shall see how other people's thinking was also dominated by the division and opposition and that this was an important trait in the intellectual life of the twenties. Kristensen's novels are representative for the continuing debate which opposed the individual and society, the subjective and the objective. They explore emotionally and live out the possibilities which others were discussing rationally. In *Livets Arabesk* the question of which of the two worlds is "more real", is one of several themes. In *En Anden* and *Hærværk*, it becomes the central question, and simultaneously

the intellectual debate will be seen to become more explicit. The period when *Livets Arabesk* was being written and read, seems for most people to have been a period of absorption and adjustment to new conditions and new ideas.

In *Livets Arabesk*, we can momentarily catch Baumann absorbed into the outer world; earlier this state is called "udadvendt klarhed" (part II, chap. 2), a phrase which contains the assumption of dichotomy:

Men nu, ja nu havde han ro. Han var ikke noget jeg mere. Han var blot et optagerapparat for begivenheder, han var et sansebundt, som dirrede. Livet filmede forbi ham som et landskab uden for et kupévindue, det vedkom ham ikke. Han fulgte nysgerrig efter det, der var interessantest. Han blev opsuget af det; men han byggede ikke i det indre. Manglen på konsekvens i tilværelsen var der. Han konstaterede den. Han blev revet af den, når den var skingrende og grel. Men den pinte ham ikke mere.

(Part II, chap 11)

This is abstract description of the way the outer world is experienced. One side of the dichotomy is suppressed, the ego, and the other side takes over. It is either-or, there is no fusion. In many other instances, the description becomes rather a concrete expression: the experience is lived more than observed. A network of more or less closely associated words is developed and used repeatedly so that the words gain significance greater than their ordinary meaning. "Virkelighed" designates the accepted, normal conception, that reality is the outside world, formed of objects and people all external to each other, having a durable identity. We are then confronted with the contradicting experience, where "reality" is "illusion" - "den trivielleste og tristeste af alle illusioner" - where it is confounded with and becomes the same as "vision" or "syn" or "drøm". The traditional contrast is destroyed. For example, during a brothel orgy, Baumann wonders if he is dreaming: "det var, som om han gik ved siden af sig selv". The sensation of being distanced from and unconcerned with events in the trivial illusion is given in the comparison with film - for example in the above quotation, "Livet filmede forbi..." and, extending the comparison, in the words "flimre" and "dirre" - more meaningful in the early cinema age:

Ibald åbnede døren og trådte ind i et værelse, der blændede ham på grund af den flimrende blanding af sollys og tæt, bølgende tobaksrøg. Han skimtede enkelte utydelige skikkelser, som bølgede frem og tilbage og diskuterede ivrigt. De svingede armene som køller; de havde store huller i ansigtet, sådan grinede de og råbte

de. Det var et rent troldeleselskab, Ibald var dumpet ned i.

(Part I, Chap 6)

Here are words taken from another recurrent comparison, the undulating veil of Maya. This too is used to describe reality, but the implication of "Maya", that behind the veil lies a true, independent coherence, is not allowed to surface. The only coherence for Baumann is "den, man selv digtede ind (i Mayas slør)". This is a dominant image in the novel¹⁵, and its terms often appear independently, changing much of the superficially "real" into incoherence and fragmentary experience.

The 19th century view of reality assumed that it was independently coherent, and that its coherence could be discovered. Both Bergson and Einstein maintained that, on the contrary, the role and influence of the observer are decisive for the description of reality and we saw how *Klingen* developed these ideas in stressing that reality is reproduced in art only after being absorbed and formed by the artist's subjectivity. The dichotomy of worlds of experience in *Livets Arabesk* and the later novels, and the resultant challenge to normal "reality" draw on these new conceptions. Baumann's problem is that he is not strong and steady enough to accept the implications of the observer's role. He cannot trust that *his* world is the only world, that there is no independent outer reality. He longs to cast off responsibility and be absorbed in the "reality" of chaos and revolution:

Det ville være dejligt, hvis katastroferne styrtede ned over ham, hvis han blev besat af den bevægelse, som farer gennem alle mennesker under en stor omvæltning og gør dem til enere i et stort hele, enere uden andet liv end massens, uden anden moral, uden andre og højere tanker end hobens.

(Part II, Chap. 2)

¹⁵ The use of the image of Maya's veil provides a small example of how a shared concept and its presuppositions will, at a given time, have a common expression - almost certainly independently. It is of course a well-known image, but it is introduced almost invariably in contemporary writing whenever there is discussion or description of new knowledge which seems to break down the usual conception of reality. It appears in the article on Einstein and Bergson quoted above, and in an article on Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche:

Lige siden den indiske visdom bak Mayas slør søkte Brahma, den evige væren, Atma, har dette verdens- og livssyn spillet en avgjørende rolle i den menneskelige aandshistorie.

(Harald Schjelderup: "Dostojewski og Nietzsche" *Litteraturen* I 1918 p.507).

Baumann's insecure attitude to the reality of the world also infects his relationships with other people. If reality is illusion, then relationships with other people become questionable; their assumed identity, what we believe we know of them, is not lasting. In *En Anden* and *Hærværk*, this is felt more strongly and becomes more important. Baumann feels that, in the incoherence of the external world, people change haphazardly, and he sees his relationship to his wife in this light:

Han greb sig i, at han havde sat sig på en stol og nu så opmærksomt på hende (den fremmede kvinde, han havde været gift med), som om det var et nyt ansigt. Var virkeligheden så skiftende? Var hun en ny, hver gang han så hende? Bedrog sanserne ham stadig? Skiftede billederne i Majas slør?

(Part I, Chap. 7)

He tries to resist. He adopts Elise and Ibald, hoping that people like them remain true to themselves, unchanging, but he is disappointed. What he had said earlier seems confirmed: "alt det der sludder om menneskenes evige forandring – og det er jo poker ikke sludder" (I, 11). He has a similar feeling about his sexual relationships, where he experiences only physical contact. His sexual partners appear thus interchangeable and the inability to know them is expressed metaphorically through the anonymity of the streets:

Og det slog ham, at han gik i en gade, i en gade gennem hele tilværelsen og mødte ansigter bag ansigter, hans hustru, Elise, frk. Langebæk, fru Anna.

Part I, 13)

Anonymity and distance, sometimes called the "mask" people wear in society - this image is developed particularly in *Hærværk* - prevent people from helping each other. Baumann feels this even in a moment of physical, sexual contact:

Søgte de øjne hjælp hos ham? Nej, han ville kysse hende, føle hendes legeme ind til sig og glemme den uovervindelig fjernhed. Han var roligst, når han lukkede øjnene. Så så han ikke den dybe afgrund, som skilte dem, som skilte alle elskende, skilte alle mennesker.

(Part I, Chap. 13)

He cannot help her any more than he had helped beggars in the street. He had only appeased them with money.

Beyond the illusory nature of reality, the characters of *Livets Arabesk* live with an intellectual awareness and emotional experience of an empty and infinite universe around them. Baumann and Johannes express and discuss this ultimate condition of life, and it affects also the lives of Pram and Ibald. Space, "det tomme rum", and empty infinity are the final point of reference

which makes everything seem meaningless. The connection with the sense that reality is illusion is not explicit, but it is there.

It is not easy to understand the concepts of empty space and infinity. Simply to name particular words is not sufficient. The concepts are gradually made graspable. For Johannes, for example, the emptiness of space is, only what *it is not*: "bundløs. "farveløs", "hverken ... eller":

Nu stirrede han atter ud i det bundløse, farveløse rum,
som hverken var lyst eller mørkt, men en intethed uden
håb ...

(Part I, Chap. 12)

Emptiness is only comprehensible as absence and disappearance. For Johannes, it is the sudden disappearance of God, and through this conception, we can understand the meaning of "det tomme rum", in his cry to Ibal:

"Rummet er tomt, siger jeg dig. Det er tomt."

(Part I, Chap. 12)

The characters of *Livets Arabesk* only accept this experience: "det tomme rum" *is*, and they do not challenge or try to change their knowledge. Johannes knows for the first time now; Baumann and Pram have known for a long time. Their knowledge forces them to conclude that there is neither aim nor external justification for existence, nor even any hope of creating one's own justification:

Hvad hjælper det, at vi tårner tingene over på hinanden
... Vi tårner dem bare op i den lykkelige indbildning, at vi
stormer det umulige ... Men det er jo ørkesløst ... For
husk på, der er jo ikke nogen bund at gå ud fra. Det må
blive frit i luften svævende alt sammen.

(Part I, Chap. 11)

The inevitable conclusion is that life is essentially meaningless, without aim or justification. We saw how Kristensen recalls the nihilism of his philosophy tutors and that others referred to people with such attitudes as "den haabløse Ungdom". But clearly things cannot rest there, even though nihilist attitudes exclude the possibility of improving life by changing it. *Livets Arabesk* contains on the contrary a change of attitude, the adoption of an ironic mode, which may not remove meaninglessness, but makes it bearable. Pram is ironic, Baumann recognises the strength afforded by irony, and, most important, the author is ironic. Irony is given expression in three forms: the symbolic rococo minuet, the Bi-Ba-Bu dolls, and the derisive tone of Baumann's "Har! Har! Har!". In the following, they all appear:

Slængt på bordet lå Bi-Ba-Bu-dukkerne med stilkede
øjne ... Var det ikke som et grin? Et af disse umotiverede
grin, som hverken letter én slev eller andre? Var det ikke

som med menuetten i rokokotiden? Var det ikke et drilleri mod de dybsindige? Gå bare gennem alle de store sale i de alt for lyse farver, gå bare gennem kulden, sø bare, selv om I bliver svimle i det tomme rum! Sø bare, og I skal finde! Se, her er det, I søgte! Bi-ba-bu!

(Part I, Chap. 11)

In order to discuss the novel's irony adequately, we must first look at its pattern of characterisation. It is useful to think of the characters as forming a pattern. They are placed and manipulated; without this meaning they have no life of their own, under the shadow of life's meaninglessness - and the pattern of contrast and comparison is part of the author's ironic attitude.

The pattern of characterisation

Although we must not see the pattern as something mechanical or rigid, it is clear that Baumann is the centrally emphasised figure with strong links going outward to the surrounding figures, Pram, Johannes and Ibal. These three are then independently interconnected.

Baumann shares with Pram and Johannes a conscious and articulate sense of life's meaninglessness. Pram, strengthened by his ironic attitude, builds his existence out of nothingness, calls it contemplation of the beautiful - like the arabesque or the rococo minuet - and forgets that his existence has no foundation. Baumann cannot. He cannot ignore Pram's inconsistency in forgetting the foundation, nor the need for a purpose. Pram's sphinx-like smile is his shield, but Baumann's laughter holds no relief (cf. last quotation). Pram acknowledges and admires Baumann's consistency, but finds it oppressive:

Der var ikke frifor at være noget knugende ved denne villa, måske på grund af dens konsekvente idé.

(Part I, Chap. 11)

For Johannes, purpose and action are necessities of existence - "Vi må handle, vi må. Det er menneskets natur". When, like Baumann, he feels that his purpose, the aim and justification of his action, has disappeared, because there is no God, he becomes homeless. Baumann shares this feeling, for he says he is homeless in his own home. Johannes remains homeless, from this moment, wandering lost between revolutionaries and their opponents, until he disappears from view.

Baumann also shares with Johannes admiration for Ibal's ability to act and become engaged with the world without becoming lost in it. Ibal seems to have no sense that his existence is meaningless.

Like Pram, he has the capacity for carefree enjoyment which Baumann envies:

“Han tænker sikkert ikke på meget andet end piger og druk og lussinger, og så på at holde sig blank – som Pram ville sige.”

(Part II, Chap. 1)

Johannes also envies this quality, contrasted with his own need to act:

“Du er ikke skabt til at forsaa, men til at handle. Det det lykkelige ved dig”

(Part I, Chap. 12)

Yet, though he may not be properly conscious of it, Ibald is not exempted from the general condition, for he wanders aimlessly and purposelessly from scene to scene in the novel¹⁶. This is the only approach to articulation of his sense of life:

“Jeg, - jeg er vældig tilfreds. Der sker noget. Og jeg dumme torsk, som ikke troede, at der kunne ske andet end at hugge en ny pakke eller få en gibbernækker bag vesten.”

(Part I, Chap. 10)

Ibald acts as a counterbalance to Baumann. He takes Baumann's villa, wife and status in the new society, and Baumann's fall into the ranks of a new proletariat corresponds inversely with Ibald's rise. Their relationship is representative for the novel's view of revolution: people change roles, but there is no progressive change in the shape of society. This was a widespread contemporary interpretation of "revolution". At one point, Baumann becomes like Ibald, unreflectingly involved in the immediate reality of storming the palace, and they join in the spirit of mutual help. Otherwise, Baumann is occupied by his search for something fast and meaningful, which does not attract Ibald. He seeks it in woman and has even hypocritically adopted the "bourgeois" life because of Karen. He had hoped for comfort and peace of mind, and feels now deceived:

Var det løgn, alt, hvad deres ansigters gennemstrålede skønhed lovede, især dette vigende blik, der ligesom førte én langt ind i riger af glæde og forjættede endnu herligere riger, bundløse herligheder og hvilende ro?

(Part I, Chap. 11)

¹⁶ In the poem "Portræt" (*Fribytterdrømme*), Kristensen describes the "law" according to which Ibald and his fellows live:

Og Loven er udlagt saalunde:

Tag til dig, tag kraftigt, tag fyldigt;

thi Tanken er Ungdommens Drabsmand,

og Livsmaal er ret ligegyldigt.

(In the final analysis, he is deceived even by the ruby cross, which had symbolised Karen's innocence and goodness. Woman remains here and in the later novels a mysterious being. It is difficult to accept that Baumann could have trusted in Karen, who, when we see her in the last chapters, has no resemblance to our expectations.) Contrasting with Baumann, Ibald welcomes the fickle nature of woman and does not seek to trust in only one. He welcomes a brief flirt in the street, or at the factory gates, and easily abandons Elise for Karen.

Baumann and Johannes both admire Ibald's way of being and acting without self-reflection. They differ in their attitudes to action. For Johannes, who fails to recognise that Ibald's life is without a purpose, believes that aims and purposes exist and must be found. Baumann believes all action is useless because without purpose or even influence. He describes his work as a surgeon:

"Jeg stod og kæmpede med de syge kadavere og vidste, at alt gik sin naturbestemte gang, at der ikke var noget at stille op mod mekanismen. Men jeg stillede noget op, jeg handlede, som en arbejder handler. Han siger, jeg vil, og tror, det lykkes ham, fordi han vil."

(Part I, Chap. 11)

For Johannes, to act is human and necessary. For Ibald, action is unthinking habit. Baumann has let action become habit, as part of his "bourgeois" life, and in his nihilism, he may be dangerous for other people, on whom he has carried out in medical experiments:

"Det er jo den gamle skepticisme, som har revet sig løs og nu er på fri fod. For nogle år tilbage var det ligegyldigt. Dengang handlede jeg ikke. Jeg hærgede kun teoretisk. Men nu er det min vane hver dag at handle, og det bliver jo rent galt, hvis der ikke er noget, som hindrer mig."

(Part I, Chap11)

Pram is also a counterbalance to Baumann, to his discontent, but he also contrasts with all three other main characters by his studied avoidance of action. He admits to Baumann that he wants to feel "hævet over livet" (I, 11), or distanced from life:

Hver gang han smilede, satte han ligesom sig selv på en sfinx-agtig afstand fra livet.

(Part I, Chap. 11)

Thus he feels untroubled and in repose (ro). Pram is contrasted with the others through these three ways of describing his attitude to the world. First, Johannes' plunge into action in the world is marked by Ibald's surprise at his fear of prison. Ibald's words recall the phrase, "hævet over livet", which was applied to Pram:

“Er du bange for at komme i spjældet? Er du bange for at blive plaffet ned? Jeg troede den onde brøleme, du var hævet over sådan noget nusseri.”

(Part I, Chap. 12)

Second, there is the contrast of rest and revolution, both elements of the definition of beauty. Pram understands and feels part of the repose of beauty, whereas Baumann says he can understand only the revolutionary nature of beauty, (II, 4). Finally, the sphinx metaphor re-appears, loosely: Ibal does not understand what the sphinx is, which is printed on a cigarette, (I, 10). The significance remains indistinct, and it serves only to make the contrast between Ibal and Pram. They are however not totally opposed. Ibal also has Pram's ability to enjoy comfort (det behagelige) more spontaneously than Pram; Pram likes big comfortable armchairs, where he sits and observes; Ibal, even on the barricades, makes himself a comfortable corner, from where he views the events in comfortable indifference:

Det ville være ærgeligt at dø, lige som man skulle til at have det mageligt.

(Part II, Chap. 12)

Ibal's "purpose" in life is to be comfortable. Thus, he can, like Pram, ignore the final denial of all purpose, the meaninglessness of existence. Significantly, Ibal equates this attitude of comfortable observation with "bourgeois" life, the life which Baumann had rejected because it is inconsistent and without foundation, (the rococo minuet).

We can now return to the question of irony in the novel – Baumann's, Pram's and the author's: their reaction to the meaninglessness of existence. Many of the characters in *Livets Arabesk* are afraid of looking foolish, or being made fools of. Ibal, for example, refuses to play the Japanese noble at Elise's whim; Elise turns on Baumann for making fun of her attempts to imitate the bourgeoisie; Baumann refuses to repeat a passage from the book Bang had given him, because it would make him feel ridiculous. Everybody wants to be taken seriously. But the author takes nobody seriously, not even his fellow-ironist, Pram. Johannes is portrayed as a Tartuffe-figure, making his sermon fit his appetite:

Imedens broder Johannes talte, spiste han kraftigt, og prædiken blev derfor akkompagneret af en latterlig, slubrende lyd.

(Part I, Chap. 1)

Or a Don-Quixote-figure, believing he is riding on a magnificent charger, which is nothing more than a jade. The author enjoys ridiculing the horse and by implication, his rider Johannes, (I, 10).

Baumann is not spared either. He is the clown-figure who reappears in aspects of Rasmussen (*En Anden*) and Jastrau (*Hærværk*)¹⁷. His ridiculous, awkward shape is described:

Hans fede overkrop og de slanke ben dannede en komisk contrast ... En tyk grosserer med sin forsultne kontorists ben.

(Part II, Chap. 4)

Or a change of viewpoint makes him ridiculous: seen by the man he meets when seeking Josephsen, Baumann is only "den tykke barhovede flødebolle" (I, 3); Stang sees him jump up from his car "som en trolde af en æske" (I, 5); on several occasions it is remarked that he has no hat, and therefore no dignity¹⁸; finally, Pram calls him a "pubertetsidiot". The author uses Johannes, who shares some of Baumann's problems, as a parody. Baumann's deep self-questioning is no more effective, not superior to Johannes' frantic emotion. The author silently compares the strange, twisted nature of Baumann's thoughts with rococo style, and thus reduces their apparent profundity to superficial triviality:

(han) blev siddende, næsten ubevægelig i en smilende gude-sløvhed, asiatisk med sine sære, snørklede tanker svævende som lotus over vand.

(Part II, Chap. 3)

Ibald is also ridiculed, for he is shown to impress others less than he impresses himself. He is afraid of Elise, unable to comprehend Johannes, and a trivial figure in a trivial revolution. One passage shows how incomprehensible for him is the essential nature of the revolution. For, though he despises Elise's aspirations to be "upper class", he is unwittingly taking Baumann's role and his wife:

Der var gået overklasse i krukken (Elise), og så havde hun mukket, fordi han havde ladet sin nye, dejlige pakke, Karen, rykke in i sine gemakker, Gud ved, hvad Karen var for en hejre.

(Part II, Chap. 12)

¹⁷ The clown and the fool are recurrent figures in Kristensen's work. They are part of his fine sense for self-irony, and in this aspect Baumann is a self-portrait. The most well-known example is the lines from "Min Pibe" (*Fribytterdrømme*):

Jeg er kun en lille Digter
halvt en Tænker, halvt en Nar, (...)

At other points, he compares himself with Chaplin, for example in the chapter "Bjerget Randa" in *En Kavalier i Spanien*, or in the poem "Situation" (*Mod den yderste Rand*).

¹⁸ The same device is more important and effective in *Hærværk*. Its significance is clear from photographs of the period, of street crowds for example, where everyone without exception will be seen wearing a hat.

Pram is allowed to be the ironic observer, supplementing the authorial irony, until the epilogue. Here, faced by the gruesome results of revolution, his attitudes and theorising fail him:

Prams smil var smukkere og blankere end nogen sinde ... han øvede sig i at se på det frygtelige, det sprængte. Han prøvede sin ro, men mærkede en sammensnøring af struben, som om han var ved at kaste op (...) Pram gik rundt og stak sin spadserestok ned i jorden. Hvorfor vidste han ikke. Men der var noget sagkyndigt ved at gå og prikke med en stok.

Physical disgust finally overcomes his studied, constructed position, his ironic observer's calm (ro):

Pram ville ikke se. Dog opfangede han et tåget billede af denne dance macabre ... to lig, der stod på hovedet, smækkede benene forover sig og sjaskede sammen, så at man måtte le, hvis man havde styrke over for livet.

Pram kastede op.

(Epilog)

Finally, we feel the author's irony in his accounts of the opposing sides in the revolution: communism and bourgeois nationalism. He throws back at the communists their professed ideas by showing that they simply take over from their enemies, the bourgeoisie. They indulge in the same orgiastic parties. They recreate the class society. The author quietly condemns this simple inversion with his use of the adjectives "imperial" in the following:

Det var kommunisthæren.

Unge mænd med geværet kastet over skulderen rykkede frem i en stram march, i et imperialistisk tempo.

(Part II, Chap. 12)

On the other hand, the hypocrisy of bourgeois nationalism reveals itself in the irony of the description of the new national bard. We know from earlier acquaintance that his marriage is not as happy as it appears. For greater effect, the author reveals his name only at the end:

Bladene fortalte, at byen var vild af lykke.

Bladene bragte billeder af kongen.

Bladene bragte billeder af en stor, national skjald (...)

Og bladene bragte billeder af skjaldens hustru (...) og bladene talte om dette lykkelige ægteskab, om harmoni (...) og sejren blev ligesom personliggjort i denne skjald og hans lykkelige hustru, Walter Stang og frue.

(Epilog)

The "revolutionary" pursuit of beauty

So far, we have seen that *Livets Arabesk* is an explanation of modes of experience and of the general conditions of existence. It deals with questions of how the individual feels the world, how he can continue to live and act, when he knows that there is no ultimate justification, how he can react to other people and social movements. *Livets Arabesk* creates and lives these questions, which other contemporaries were debating intellectually. We have also seen that various forms of irony overshadow everything, casting doubt on individuals and their experience, but also being itself a mode of experience. This is however not everything. We shall see, turning first to the title, that the novel functions in another way. It has a positive function, as well as being ironically negative.

The title, *Livets Arabesk*, is more than a label; it defines the work. For a more explicit definition, we must turn to the passage already cited in connection with the contemporary theories of art. Ducker says that Pram's continual seeking for enjoyment, his continual movement, is in fact only motionlessness. Pram does not agree:

"Jeg vil ikke kalde det ubevægelighed, men snarere en arabesk, unyttig og skøn."

He then goes on to a description of beauty:

"Skønheden vil jeg ikke dræbe ved at definere og begrænse. Den er den bitreste sorg, den er råhed, den er den vildeste glæde, den er religiøsitet, den er raffineret uskyld; men den er først og fremmest en evig revolution, og den er roen midt i revolutionen."

(Part II, Chap. 4)

Pram has therefore defined the arabesque as both "useless" and "revolutionary" - apparently a self-contradiction. In order to clarify this, we must turn to *Kunst Økonomi Politik* (1932), where Kristensen describes ideas about art which he and others held in the post-war years. "Kunsten kunde selvfølgelig ikke have med Moralen at gøre, når denne aldeles ikke eksisterede." This refers to the post-war nihilism we discussed earlier. He says further "der var Kunst for Kunstens Skyld", which in 1920 still had "noget af det revolutionæres Glans over sig":

Det var en frisk Teori, selv om den var forkert og selvmodsigende. Det friske var, at den var en Kamp mod Kristendommens indsnævrende Moralbegreber. Det selvmodsigende var, at de bedste af Kunstnere, som vilde skabe Kunst uden Tendens, selv blev tendensiøse.

Pram's "useless" implies then a rejection of "morality" or "tendency" in the late 19th century sense. "Revolutionary" however would seem to go beyond this, despite later attempts to weaken its significance. Kristensen himself and others have caused confusion by introducing

the derogatory formula "l'art pour l'art" retrospectively. At the time, it was either refused or strongly qualified, as we saw above. Both *Kunst Økonomi Politik* and the earlier article "Den unge Lyrik og dens Krise" (Tilskueren, 1925) simplify matters because they are part of Kristensen's reorientation. They ignore the trust in the emergence of a new literature to suit "the new age", everybody was talking about. The important point is that the new literature was to be aware of the world and its problems, but was to offer, instead of "bad", tendentious art, the creation of new modes of experience and criticism of social ills through the exclusive pursuit of beauty. Pram's "revolution" in beauty must be understood in this way. Art is not a narrowly political activity but, creating beauty, it engages in Gelsted's "Eksemplets Polemik", in which commentary on life is secondary but integral. We have already seen that in *Livets Arabesk* the commentary is ironic. The pursuit of beauty, the occupation of the artist, is therefore revolutionary because it both breaks down old habits and prejudices of thinking, and allows a glimpse into something different and new. Of course, this is the usual, repeated rebellion of generation against generation, but here the end of the war and with it the whole way of living seemed to make it a conflict of a new age against the old.

Beauty and the arabesque are both "revolution" and "ro i revolutionen". What is the meaning of the second? It is the artist's need to step back and observe, which enables him to see and re-create the arabesque, the beautiful in the muddle of existence. To create the arabesque is to become engaged in a special way with the world, and *Livets Arabesk* is an attempt to do so. The novel defines itself as art engaged in life, and in its range, covers a considerable slice of contemporary Danish life, with its moral, philosophical and political problems and events.

"Ro i revolutionen" has different meanings for the various characters in the novel. We have seen that both for Pram and for Ibal it means a comfortable, intact position for undisturbed observation and enjoyment. They see this as the essence of "bourgeois" life. They ignore the inner world, the soul's need for consistent, coherent existence, and concentrate on what Pram calls objectivity (saglighed), conscious superficiality. Baumann seeks something similar, but cannot ignore his own knowledge of its futility. He seeks it particularly in the activity of revolution, for there he feels he will be absorbed by the outer world, and his attention drawn away from the inner (cf II, 2). The quotation Bang shows Baumann makes the absorption explicit:

Der Revolutionär ist ein geweihter Mann. Er hat weder persönliche Interessen, noch Geschäfte, Gefühle, Anhänglichkeiten, Eigentum, ja nicht einmal einen

Namen. Alles in ihm wird absorbiert durch einen ausschliesslichen Gedanken, eine einzige Leidenschaft: die Revolution.

(Part II, Chap. 9)

(This, though not acknowledged in the text, is an extract from the *Revolutionäre Katechismus* by Sergei Netschajew, cited in Marx/Engels *Ein Komplott gegen die Internationale Arbeiter-Assoziation*; the text is however not identical and must be from a different translation.)

Here we have again the either-or choice which we said is fundamental in this and the other novels. Baumann and the others live either in the individual's inner world or in the outer world of "reality". Baumann hopes that revolution will make the one the same as the other – not the same as identity and fusion of the two – that he will thus be relieved of the strain of the dichotomy:

Hans (Baumanns) tanke havde i ét nu gjort springet fra det indre, individuelle kaos til det ydre, som var behersket af en endnu mere idiotisk Gud (...) Han anede, at han måtte gøre revolutionen med, at kaos var udtrykket for hans indre verden, at kaos måske ville betyde en udløsning, en befrielse for ham.

(Part II, Chap. 6)

But the revolution disappoints him.

The author indicates that true repose is something else, something perhaps unattainable - the "large, shining bell", which rings melodiously beyond many creaking, rusted gates of disharmonies:

Den lyd var som at stå på jorden.

(Part I, Chap. 11)

It is the ability to be engaged with and go through and beyond present disharmonies and conflicts. It is described in similar terms in the poem "Landet Atlantis":

Farverne sprænges, og Formerne sprænges,
og Skønheden skabes af grelle Konflikter.

Kristensen describes his artistic process in two other poems, "Fribytter" and "Chrysantemum" (all three from *Fribytterdrømme*). It is the personalised absorption and re-creation of aspects of the world. The subject-matter may become unrecognisable:

Linjens Renhed efterskaber
helst jeg i en Arabesk
("Chrysantemum")

and maybe developed by hypotheses:

Om Chrysantemum kredser
Tanken sig, gaar ind og ud,

hvirvler vildt med Hypoteser.

Dette er det andet Bud.

The process often leads away from reality, into imagination and dream. *Fribytterdrømme* contains for example an imagined picture of "Rio Janeiro" and a dream, "Drømmen om Adén". The process could easily become an "escape" or "flight from reality", but though this kind of formulation is often derogatory, flight may be a symptom of dissatisfaction as much as fear. Dissatisfaction can be compensated in the creations of the imagination.

In the case of *Livets Arabesk*, flight from reality does not mean escape into the exotic, but rather the imaginative development of the potential in reality. Kristensen imagined how the Easter crisis of 1920 might have been if it had developed like similar events in other parts of Europe; what he imagines was not impossible. Nor does he arbitrarily determine the detail of his development, for the failure of revolution in *Livets Arabesk* can be based on the failure in 1920. This is perhaps not the writer's final word on revolution, but his interpretation of the possibilities in Denmark, after the disappointment of 1920¹⁹. We remember here his irony turned against the quarrelling communist leaders, the advancing communist relief-force, the broken ideals of the so-called proletariat, taking over bourgeois life.

The critics felt something of this relationship of fiction in *Livets Arabesk* to reality, and inevitably they compared the novel with Henning Kehler's *Russiske Kroniker* (1920), which told of the Russian Revolution. The truth of the latter was preferred to the fiction of the former. The wide sales of Kehler's book suggest the public also preferred truth, and indicate how starved of detailed knowledge and experience of large-scale events the public felt. Kehler was one of the few people of his generation in Denmark to meet war and revolution at first hand. Others felt the need, and some manage to "escape" into Europe²⁰. Kristensen's later poem "1914-1924" describes his and their feelings:

¹⁹ In the article "Den unge Lyrik og dens Krise" (*Tilskueren* Jul 1925 p.31), Kristensen declares that he lost his faith in communism when he saw it at work in the East in 1922:

Mine Digte blev roligere. Frygten for kommunistiske
Eksperimenter i Østen gjorde mig varsom – Her er dog ikke
Tale om Selvforsvar! Man kan mene, hvad man vil!

²⁰ Bønnelycke and Nygaard went, and wrote about themselves. Thomas Dinesen represents the extreme case, because he went off to volunteer for service at the front and won the Victoria Cross. When Dinesen published his *No Man's Land* (1928), Kristensen recognised his own youthful desire for adventure which was never allowed to flourish, ("Kunst og Politik" *Tilskueren* Nov. 1929 p. 358). Kristensen also tells (*Aabenhjertige Fortællelser* p. 124) how he had to wait three years for a

Usynligt blev min Skæbne til derude,
og Krigen blev mit evige Motiv.
Usynligt var det største i min Ungdom.
Et Genskær og en Genlyd var mit Liv.
(...)(...).

Jeg boede i et Land, hvor intet skete,
et lille Land, hvov intet skulde ske.
Usynligt var det største i min Ungdom.
Kun Bladets sorte Skrift fik jeg at se.

In a short story several years before Paludan's description of "the generation that could not help stumbling at the start", Kristensen describes how a young man, Strohmayer, feels lost and inferior to his contemporary who had taken part in the war²¹, (*Strohmayers store Oplevelse*). Finally, in *En Kavalier i Spanien* he described his reaction to the word war²²:

La guerra! La guerra! Krig! Krig! Det vildeste ord fra min
ungdom! Det ord, som har revet hele mit sind op, fordi
jeg aldrig har oplevet dets realitet!
(Chap 1)

In the light of these quotations, it seems that *Livets Arabesk* functions in part as a means to experience which was not otherwise available. Contemporary theories of art and Kristensen's own poems on the creative process attribute to art the potential for changing the observed world, according to the artist's experience²³. In

passport before he could at last, late in 1921, after writing *Livets Arabesk*, travel to Munich in search of revolution.

²¹ In a review of 1923, Kristensen assigned these sentiments to the whole generation:

Der kan tales om et Handlingens Gennembrud, om en Trang
til Realiteter, til Ekspansion og Intensitet, alle sammenfarlige
Ord, som har besnæret vor Generation, men some er Udtryk
for vor Længsel.
("Rejsende" *Tilskueren* 1923 2, p. 59)

²² It is interesting to compare this with the later poem, "Til min Ven Digteren Gustaf Munch-Petersen", which expresses admiration for the man who was able to go away and take part in the Spanish Civil War, to act and to will, and which despises the duties and emptiness of the life of the professional writer:

Her skal vi andre nu vandre
gennem et Ælte af Kunst,
blive en kedelig Gælspost uden Mæcenernes Gunst,
blive en Støvhob af Gloser
skrevet af Tvang og af Pligt,
medens du hviler, skudt ned, skudt ned,
dit Livs ubesindigste Digt.

²³ Cf. note 5 above and quotations from Gelsted; Expressionist theory is not averse to attempts to raise imagination over reality, in so far as it is maintained that only the experiencing subject can give form and therefore

“Chrysantemum”, we saw that art’s second commandment bids the artist produce hypotheses. The hypothesis of revolution in Denmark helps Baumann and ultimately the writer to feel freed of inward-looking speculation, even though we know that as far as the writer is concerned, Danish revolution must be considered with irony. This is how Baumann feels:

Der matte ske noget, der matte lyne en katastrofe, som fangede ham helt. Under stærke begivenheder følte han en udadventt klarhed, som svaledede; han følte sig som en sjæle-blok. Hvorfor kom de da ikke? Hvor længe ville denne revolution lade vente på sig, denne revolution,

reality to external things. Another Expressionist theorist, Hermann Bahr, writes:

Jetzt aber scheint’s, daß sich in der heraufkommenden Jugend mit Heftigkeit der Geist sich wieder meldet. Vom äußeren Leben weg kehrt sie sich dem inneren zu, lauscht den Stimmen der eigenen Verborgenheit und glaubt wieder, daß der Mensch nicht bloß das Echo seiner Welt, sondern vielleicht eher ihr Täter oder doch jedenfalls ebenso stark ist wie sie.
(*Expressionismus* 1916 p. 93)

Kristensen says that this was an important work for him at the time, (in *Det skabende Øje* 1956 p. 119), and in an interview in 1931, he recalled his earlier attitude:

“Jeg troede en Gang paa Kunstens Værdi i sig selv. Fantasien var den egentlige Virkelighed (...)”
 (“Marxisme - !” *Ekstrabladet* 4 April 1931)

I would also like to introduce here a note found with the manuscript in Det Kongelige Bibliotek, and said to be Kristensen’s own words:

Manuskripterne til *Livets Arabesk* af Tom Kristensen bestaar af 4 Kvarter, som er Udkastene til Romanen, og det endelige Manuskript, et uhyre omfattende, renskrevet Værk paa 350 Foliosider. Interessant er det at følge Romanens forskellige Facer, dens Udvikling fra en bredt anlagt Jeg-Roman i maskeret Form, til en objektiv Beretning, hvor Jeg-Personen er skaaret bort, og hvor en af Bipersonerne er rykket frem i Forgrunden. Manuskripterne viser tydeligt denne Udvikling fra ungdommelig Subjektivisme til Objektivisme.

Only the final version is in the library. This note is probably connected with Kristensen’s attempt to sell the manuscript in 1921, (this is mentioned in *Politiken* 22 November 1921, where the wording resembles that of the note). If we bear in mind that the last lines of “Fribytter”:

at slynge sin indre Verden
med dens Flammehjul ud i Rummet?

it seems reasonable to suggest that the writer not only wants to develop and replace reality in literature, but also to give his imagined, literary reality its own status independent of the artist. This is thin ice, of course, but we find something similar in Bønnelycke’s rejection of what he called pre-war subjectivism and l’art pour l’art, (cf. note 5). There may well also be some influence from Gelsted’s change of formulation in the early 20s.

som alle her i landet ventede nu da Tyskland var blevet sovjet?

(II, 2)

When neither revolution nor other catastrophic events presented themselves, the novel provides an outlet for emotional needs, it *becomes* what it seems to describe²⁴. The writer creates and lives in the events at the same time as he perceives and organises them into a coherent whole. In organising them, he achieves a critical comprehension of them, and creates a work of art. The amount of convinced satisfaction which the reader feels with the novel is an indication of the degree to which the writer has succeeded in organising, comprehending and communicating - three processes which are indistinguishable from each other. This is where the kind of aesthetic criticism we decided not to be concerned with, will be relevant to the approach to understanding we have used here.

In a sense, our approach has been more than fair to the writer. We have picked out and developed, with the help of our familiarity with the cultural and intellectual environment, those features of the novel which seemed the most important and basic, and which in the text tend to be lost in a mass of insufficiently organised detail. There is a perception of the meaninglessness of life and the world which is both an intellectual awareness of philosophical and scientific argumentation and something emotional, felt close to the skin. Simultaneously, there is irony which holds off from the consequences of absolute acceptance of meaninglessness. In this light, it seems ambiguous to become involved, to *be* the ultimate triviality of political and social revolution, and this too is held at an ironic distance, without being ironically destroyed. For though it might be trivial, it is still necessary, it might offer relief. And the whole is consciously art, being itself but thereby maintaining

²⁴ In a speech to Studentersamfundet in 1926, Kristensen is obviously building on his own experience when he generalises the process of substituting imagination for reality:

Vi lever I Ordenes og Konferencernes Tid, og det er Verdenskrigens Skyld. Verdenskrigen tegner til at blive en Ulykke for Danmark, fordi vi havde Held med os og blev holdt udenfor. Det er den største Realitet, vi har oplevet, men vi har oplevet den som i Drømme og har maattet fantasere os til den (...)

By this time he had abandoned his own revolutionary youth and despised the effect of one word:

Der er et Ord, De sikkert nogle Gang evil faa at høre her i Studentersamfundet. Det er : Revolution. Det er et Maal, siges der, eller et Middel til at naa et Maal. Men det er andet end et Ekko fra den anden store Realitet, den russiske Revolution, som vi ogsaa har maattet fantasere os til.
("Tom Kristensen som Rustaler" *Politiken* 3 Oct. 1926)

involvement in the whole of lived experience, because it has the "truth" of having been lived, of having "passed through" the artist. Art's function, the novel would seem to imply, is not only organisation and perception, but also to challenge meaninglessness, to be and to create despite the futility of being and doing. Perhaps unfairly, we might use Baumann's appreciation of the minuet to describe the novel:

Hvorfor ikke slå tiden ihjel med at gøre ligegyldig-
hederne indviklede?

(Part I, 11)

This would be unfair to the intention, but ultimately a fair comment on the realisation. For - here we must come back to the aesthetic failings - the novel fails to convince us that it is what it says it is: an arabesque-like account of life, a polemical, "revolutionary" critique of essential aspects of the contemporary world.

Functions of the text

The novel's significance for writer and public

We have already begun to gather from the text something of how the novel can be assumed to function for its author. We have gone beyond the obvious assumption that the novel is a projection of the author's self, without wanting to deny that this is so²⁵. Kristensen has not discussed *Livets Arabesk* directly in this light, but the short story *Ulykken* - included in *Vindrosen* (1934) but first published in 1924 - has direct relevance to *Livets Arabesk*. This story describes the reactions of the poet Erlandsen to the site of a terrible railway accident one night. Faced by the cruelty of the catastrophe, he consciously concentrates his attention on the shapes and colours, so that he does not have to think of people's pain and death. He is afraid he cannot withstand the sight of these; he feels the same reaction for which Pram is criticised:

Han anede alting; men når hans Tanke forlod Farverne og Linjerne, Waggontagets Diagonal, og den anden hoppende Diagonal af Soldater, som med Lygter på Maverne sprang ned ad den sorte Skråning, følte han et

²⁵ Cf. the reference to the first person in the quotation above (note 19). Later Kristensen suggested that it was a more complex question than simple projection:

"I min første roman *Livets Arabesk* havde jeg en hovedperson, som jeg troede ikke var mig selv, han var i virkeligheden *Hærværk*, som jeg dengang ikke havde oplevet. Det kommer dog sikkert af, at der er en forbandet lighed mellem ens karakter og ens skæbne."

("Dialog på Thurø" *Politiken* 1 July 1956)

Greb om Struben og en Angst for at kaste op. Og en Opkastning vilde bryde hele det artistiske Syn, hele Troen på hans Evne til at se Livet lige ind i dets flammende Ansigt, når alle Trækkene var sprængte. Men han vilde se, han vilde.

There is here both the need to see and experience which we found in the poem "1914-1924" and in *En Kavalier i Spanien* and the fear of not being strong enough. He admires but cannot imitate "et asiatisk Udtryk af Ro" - reminding us of much in *Påfuglefjeren* - which other people have. He looks to art to provide him with something similar:

Han tumlede med Farvefantasier, undertiden med Kvæstelser, men vendte stadig tilbage til Farverne som for at hærde sig. Stoffet måtte hærdes! Sindet måtte hærdes!

We find the same preoccupation with shapes and colours in *Livets Arabesk*, especially in the descriptions of demonstrations and street fights, and in the final account of the destruction which Pram sees. *Livets Arabesk* provides both the violence and the means of facing the violence²⁶. The poet in *Ulykken* finally realises that in fact his concentration on forms and colours leads him away from life and deadens his feelings:

Og Livet og Døden strømmede i et Nu ind over ham, Livet med en ukendt Varme, Døden med en ukendt Kulde, og i Tanken smed han alle Farver og Linjer fra sig.

The author's final comment on Pram in *Livets Arabesk*, that he cannot face life, is also an indication in this direction, a final step away from Pram who had so far represented the author's own attitudes²⁷. Kristensen is a fine observer of himself at several levels, who can come to no easy conclusions.

²⁶ Niels Egebak has a useful discussion about what he calls "skrifthandling", the function of the work for the author, (*Tom Kristensen* 1971 p. 124ff.).

Kristensen later tended to condemn this function of art:

"Hvis jeg skulde angribe Hemigway som Type, kunde jeg gore det, fordi han constant opsøger de stærke Begivenheder. Jeg har selv haft den Trang, men jeg er bange for, at den splitter Livet ad. Vi talte om Grusomheder hos mig, javel, de skyldes i Virkeligheden en Svaghed, en Trang til Hærtningsproces. Jeg regner ikke med at være Sadist, men jeg syntes, at det artistiske Ideal maatte være at kunne konstatere selv de mest gruopvækkende Ting ganske klart - og det vilde føre in i en Art Menneskelighed.

("Stærke Begivenheder splitter Livet ad" *Politiken* 1 August 1943)

²⁷ In the note found with the manuscript [cf. note 23], there is mention of the novel's original first-person form. The first person was probably Pram, for Kristensen describes himself as "an observer". He also describes

When talking about his work's outward movement, what it should do for others, Kristensen concentrates on the successful moments of creation and on the joy this can bring to both author and public:

... vi der nu skal til, vi vil vise, at de andre har glemt
Fantasien, vi vil Berigelse og Kraft, vi vil skabe Farver og
Fest i Verden (...)

Doubts about the meaning of all action and creation, feelings that to see only the beautiful even in the cruelty of existence is to risk self-deception, these worries are the author's. Asked what he intends in his work, he says he and Bønnelycke want to show some new way of seeing and living in reality, in contrast to minute observation of superficialities:

Vi vil fremstille intensere ... ikke som Forgængerne at
bruge det realistiske Billede, vi er ikke Realister, men
derved, at vi tager Drømmen in i vor Tilværelse, giver
det, vi skriver, noget af Drømmens Styrke. Paa den
Maade skaber vi en større, en mangfoldigere Literatur.
("Tom Kristensen om Fremtidens Digtning" *B.T.* 29
November 1921)

The public shall have the benefit of the writer's perceptions without the troubles of his doubts. Concentration on this function in contrast to usual beliefs that art should have moral and didactic purposes²⁸

himself as an artist untouched by life's violence, the attitude which is criticised in *Ulykken*:

"Jeg has slet ikke Tidens Form for Livs- og Lysthunger. Jeg
tror nærmest, at det, jeg har set som Barn og som ung (...)
at det har fyldt mig med en undrende Lede. Jeg har set, hvor
Menneskene kan gøre Kærlighedslivet, det erotiske Liv, -
uaandeligt. Jeg har set Lasten, men jeg vil kun se den.
(Bestemmer man selv det?)

Der er dem, som fødes i den, de ved ikke andet for de kan
ikke se den, men det kan baade De og jeg, og derfor kan vi
vælge. Jeg har lært at se Livet saa brutalt, som det er, og
som den Artist, jeg er, er jeg gaaet blankt igennem det. I
Proletarkvarteret saa man paa mig, som en Fremmed; jeg
blev regnet for noget andet straks fra lille, det har vel ogsaa
sat sit Spor i mit Sind."

("Tom Kristensen om Fremtidens Digtning" *B.T.* 29 November
1921)

²⁸ There was considerable discussion at the time about the public function of different kinds of literature. People were worried by the new emphasis of the younger generation and by the rapid increase in interest in cheap foreign literature, especially English "railway literature". In a speech in 1922 ("Bogen" in *Liv og Kunst* 1929), Georg Brandes said that literature has two aims: "Opsving af Menneskesjæle" and "Oplysning". A lesser critic, Richard Bryde, said Danish literature could only survive if the didactic and "uplifting" function of "serious" literature spread to the reading of the non-cultured public, ("Den litterære Misere i Danmark"

and particularly the publicity attached to such statements diverted attention from the writer's occupation with the darker aspects of existence and the moral and political implications of his perceptions and doubts. Later views, including Kristensen's own, then exaggerated the colour and the joy - more evident in his poetry - to the detriment of existential doubt, moral and political scepticism and exploration of the artist's dilemma - evident in the less successful and more easily dismissed novel, *Livets Arabesk*.

Critical analysis of the novel's significance

At this stage, after interpreting *Livets Arabesk* on its own terms, we can take a step back from the text and take a more critical view. We have seen that *Livets Arabesk* is a novel full of ideas and theories which are organised and experienced both intellectually and emotionally. Yet, comparing the language of the text with ordinary usage, we perceive a significant "mistake", and different referential use of words which are normally very closely defined: "revolution" and "proletariat". Different usage may certainly reflect the writer's need to be faithful to his personal experience, but it may also simultaneously be symptomatic of some self-deception or suppression.

Livets Arabesk describes the failure of a "proletarian revolution". Clearly enough the description seemed "justified" by the failure of the Easter Crisis 1920 to become the trigger of revolution and the beginning of a republic. Kristensen's associates in *Nye Tanker* expressed disappointment and Kristensen's own disappointment and near disgust becomes apparent much later in *Hærværk*. Jastrau describes in bitter tones the demonstration in front of Amalienborg Palace, the meetings in front of the town hall - all to no avail: "Jeg tror ikke paa nogen revolution her i landet. Det har danskerne ikke karakter nok til." (I, 4)²⁹. In *Livets Arabesk*, the failure is a result of

Litteraturen III p. 375). In contrast, Sven Ranulf suggested that literature has in fact no moral influence on its public, only making them "mere skikket til Trædemøllen næste Dag", thus diverting attention from the wrongs of bourgeois society (*Litteraturen og Publikum* 1920). Finally, we must remember that Gelsted, following Herbert Iversen, said that art has a political, social function: "moderne Kunst virker stimulerende ved at vise os Vej til nye Livsmuligheder," but also that "Kunsten er en Form for Liv og har som saadan sit Formaal i sig selv, samtidig med at den i Forhold til Livets Helhed kan ses som Middel" (*Ekspressionisme* 1919 p. 44).

²⁹ It would appear that the main cause of the constitutional crisis was disagreement about the reunification of Denmark and Schleswig. The Syndicalists attempted to take advantage of the weakness, but as there

the tendency of the "proletariat" to imitate the world and values of the "bourgeoisie", as soon as they have the necessary power. Undoubtedly there is a tendency for other classes to imitate the class with the greatest social prestige and power, although it is for the most part only a question of superficialities. Kristensen returns to the question in *Hærværk*, where Jastrau notices the same tendency in Else. The analysis is superficial, but this, though significant, is less obviously a "mistake" than Kristensen's equating the "proletariat" with petty criminals, prostitutes and pimps. The mistake is carried over into the description of communist revolution which, instead of arising within the country, is caused by the appearance of the communist army at the frontier. Real working-class people appear only marginally in the novel, for the author is more fascinated by the underworld of vice, immorality and violence. Kristensen felt part of the working class, where his family had belonged, even though by this time they were beginning to climb the social ladder. In 1921, he said:

Der er Bondeblod og Proletarblod i mig. Jeg har set hele
Slægten arbejde sig op fra Fiskergade, helt nede fra,
baade fra Forfald og fra Last.
(*B.T.* 29 Nov 1921)

Yet he found more to interest his artist's eye and his compulsion to face action and violence in the underworld, and in *Livets Arabesk* he confuses the two. In the interview in 1921, the same tendency is there, even though he draws back from the word "Proletariat". Asked if he has lived among "Proletarerne", he says:

Ja, det har jeg. Jeg kan nu ikke lide det Ord: Proletarer
... for hvad er det. Men jeg har levet mellem Apacher og
Alfonser, og jeg har som Dreng set til Bunds i Lasternes
Dyb.

He "refuses" to see the working classes at the factory where his father worked and where the family lived, in a flat within the factory grounds³⁰. This "refusal" reduces the "proletarian revolution" from its economic and social dimension to the spectacle of sight and sound, immorality and violence with which he feels no personal ties and which he can simply observe.

The attitude behind *Livets Arabesk* is therefore the observer's, in essence Pram's, and the novel's "declared" attempt to place itself within a "revolutionary" and *active* theory of the pursuit of beauty,

was no immediate revolutionary basis, the Revolution, though hoped-for, could hardly be expected. (cf. Tage Kaarsted *Påskekrisen* 1920, 1968)

³⁰ It is also significant that in a poem written for *Arbejderens Almanak* 1925, "Fabriken", Kristensen concentrates on picking out the aesthetic effects of sound and light. The poem finishes:

Det er en Verden med vældige Skygger,
men med et Lys, som kan blænde mit Blik.

is belied. The author's role of sceptic observer and poet is simultaneously justified by the failure of revolution and revelation of the "true" character of the "proletariat". The social position of the successful poet is in fact among the intellectuals who are part of the bourgeoisie, despite their critical attitude towards them. *Livets Arabesk* maintains and justifies this factual position, even though it too criticises the bourgeoisie. Kristensen thus maintains his situation won through the general acclamation of *Fribytterdrømme*. This gave him the social, existential, and, to a limited extent, financial security which should have been automatic after graduating from university, but which he had apparently lost when he discovered his inaptitude for teaching³¹. Thus, though a sceptic and a "Fribytter", he does not lose his attachment to society, he does not become a "vagabond"³².

It is clear that Kristensen himself felt and recognised at least part of the incongruity of his position. Pram, his other self for much of the novel, is the sceptical observer who lives in a working-class district, yet enjoys a middle-class way of life. Yet when the author eventually criticises Pram's attitude, turning on himself as it were - perhaps this is why he calls it an "Epilogue" - he criticises his weakness of character, his inability to face real violence.

He does not criticise his social and existential position³³. The novel, like the story *Ulykken*, brings him to recognition of and honesty about part of the function of art, as a means of coming to terms with himself. It does not help him to recognise the anomaly of his social position, but rather to cover over and justify the anomaly. In order to achieve this, he has to weight the balance by the "wrong" use of "proletariat" and "revolution" - an unconscious action. The "wrong" use appears for the critic as a symptom of and entry into the reasons for the unconscious self-justification.

³¹ He recounts his lack of success as a teacher in *Aabenhjertige Fortielser* (p. 106 ff) and, talking of Bønnelycke's financial gains from his success, tells something of "det vildeste renæssanceliv" he could afford. By 1921, financial success was no longer sure to accompany critical acclaim.

³² The similarity of meaning of these two words, "fribytter" and "vagabond", might hide their real difference. Kristensen has often expressed admiration for the unattached vagabond: Bønnelycke often went off alone into the country; in the poem "En sandfærdig Legende om Nis Petersen" (*Udvalgte Digte*), the same admiration shows through. After writing *Hærværk*, however, he recognised that the freebooter-role was something different. It was the means for the gifted individual of climbing the social ladder, freeing himself from his origins. (cf. Harald Bergstedt "Da Tom løb Linen ud" *Social-Demokraten* 30 November 1930)

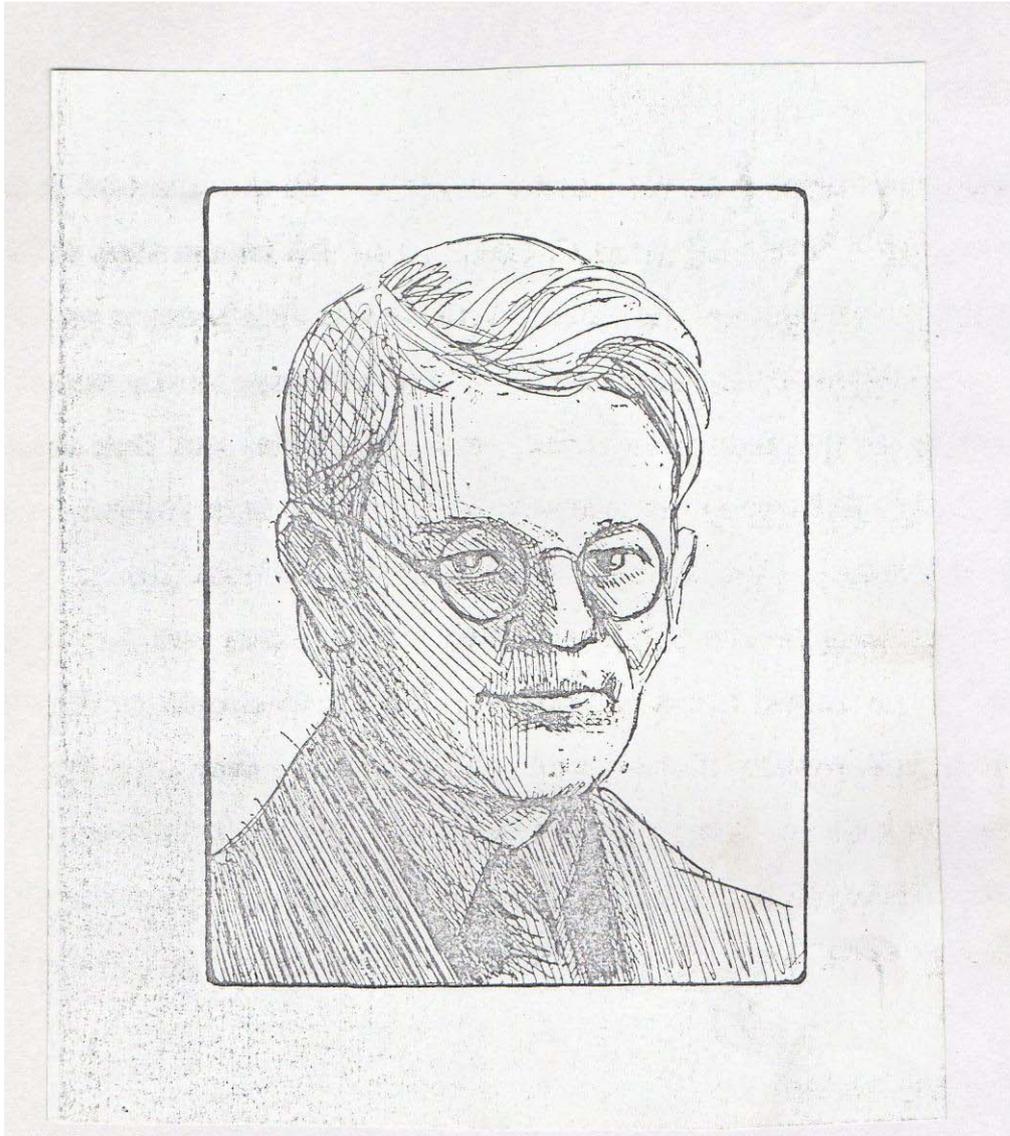
³³ Henning Kehler felt something of this in his review of *Livets Arabesk* (cf. earlier quotation).

In a much later interview, Kristensen comes nearer without achieving self recognition. Asked why he writes, he says he does not know; pressed to choose between the reasons that writing is "flight" or "a means to conquer", he says:

Så må jeg sige, at det er et middel til at besejre – til at erobre livet – og den eneste måde, jeg virkelig har kunnet over for livet. Jeg skulle jo have undervist, men løb fra pædagogikum. Jeg kunne ikke tænke mig, at jeg nu var færdig med livet. Nu skulle det først erobres, og det kunne jeg ikke tænke mig at gøre fra et kateder. Jeg udgav så *Fribytterdrømme* og romanen *Livets Arabesk*, som jeg i øvrigt ikke kan lide idag.

("Kunsten udvider det indre rum" *Hjørring Seminarium Årsskrift* 1966 p.27)

In fact, the choice was not one of alternatives. For *Livets Arabesk* is a means both to conquer and to justify the author's position, and a flight from the implications of that position, as part of the bourgeoisie he despises, cut off from the people whom he feels he ought to belong to. We are using the words in a different way to Kristensen and his interviewer, in order to underline the gap between the author's and critic's views of the work.



EN ANDEN

Introduction

En Anden was written in two months in 1923. It was a second book about China, for a volume of poetry written after the return from China, *Paafuglefjeren*, had appeared in 1922. Undoubtedly Kristensen's voyage to China was a milestone in many ways. In his writing, it was marked very obviously in differences of style, tone and rhythm, and then correspondingly in the differences of subject matter and of intellectual, and emotional attitudes. The contrast we shall notice between *Livets Arabesk* and *En Anden* is all the more marked because there remains a basic similarity in the social and political situation in contemporary Denmark. It is also marked because it indicates willed divergence away from the general tendency of the group of intellectuals with whom Kristensen had associated. We shall go into this further by looking at attitudes to their notions of "individual and society" and "subjectivism and objectivism".

The "continuing crisis"

The similarity of the historical contexts of the two novels implies a more than a lack of change and development. For we saw that after the war people generally held the view that they lived in a period of crisis as a result of the war and the failure to establish a proper peace. Yet this "crisis" continued, in contrast to the normal implication of the word that it will be short lived. Catastrophes of many kinds and dimensions also continued throughout the world. Economic problems, in a sense more dangerous because liable to affect everybody, appeared in the war ravaged countries and also in Denmark. Even the war profiteers were hit under the apparently solid Landmandsbank was caught and ruined financially. The difference between the immediate post-war aura of critical turmoil and the growing awareness of the difficulties of deep reaching long-term crisis can be felt in the difference between the Easter crisis in 1920 and the Landmandsbank crisis in 1922. The first lasted a few emotional days and left no visible trace, the second lasted months and undermined confidence in leading social and political figures. The economic situation led to even higher unemployment. There was less money to spend on luxuries and this, together with the inevitable waning of interest in fashion, meant for the group of young writers who had been so popular, a drop in sales and public

success. The "expressionist movement" for what it had ever been, was disintegrating³⁴.

The effect in politics of the economic difficulties was to turn attention towards the challenge and alternatives present in the thinking behind communism, syndicalism and so on. People became aware of responsibilities in the "social sphere", intellectuals began to weigh the "individual" against "society" and to find the latter heavier. Among Kristensen's contemporaries, one man, Herbert Iversen, seemed to have foreshadowed the change even before the war, before this apparent but in fact only symbolic watershed. He stood out as different among the pre-war "radicals" of Studentersamfundet, where Kristensen had been a keen member. In a "chronicle" on the 10th anniversary of the outbreak of war, Jesper Ewald recalled what had made Iversen different and what the decade had changed:

Det var hans Virkelighedssans, der bestemte hans Foragt for den Enkeltes Liv og Død, det var den, der prægede hans Opfattelse af Begrebet Kultur. Den Enkelte lever or dør, mens samfundet bestaar, derfor er Samfundet Virkeligheden (...) Tiaaret 1914-24 har givet os et nyt Syn paa Verden (...) Jeg tror, at dette ny Syn først og fremmest vil træde frem som en Kultus af den *sociale Følelse*, i en Flytning af Fornemmelser fra Individet over paa Samfundet.
(*Politiken* 2 August 1924)

In the analysis of *Livets Arabesk*, we pointed to the dichotomy of Kristensen's view of the inner and outer worlds of the individual. We said that this is an important trait in all three novels of the 1920s. The quotation above is symptomatic of how a similar dichotomy gradually became public property in the intellectual atmosphere. In *En Anden* the dichotomy, even more important than in *Livets Arabesk*, gains a more complex significance by virtue of the public meanings with which it is associated. The dichotomy forces a choice and, politically, the decision to become involved with "society" was equated with some kind of socialist creed, whereas "individualism" was associated with and presumed to be a legacy of 19th-century liberal capitalism. The pre-war world is again opposed to the new age. Without entering into the class opposition of individual and society, Poul Henningsen began to formulate the choice in 1922:

Det nittende Aarhundrede var paa Grund af Udviklingen nødt til at specialisere sig, og det var godt; men man glemte, at Socialiseringstanken ikke uden at føre til Kaos kan løsrives fra en Sammenhæng, den sammenfattende

³⁴ The rise and fall of "Expressionism" is described in Werner Svendsen's "Faldet i det tomme Rum" in *Danske Digtere i det 20. Aarhundrede*, 1966.

Idé, Samfundstanken er netop en saadan sammenfattende Idé, og det er jo nu en udbredt Mening, at Manglen paa Samfundstanken har ført os ud i den nuværende økonomiske Misère ...

(*Politiken* 1 April 1922)

Here, the practical implications are introduced in the reference to the economic problems and there is an indication of the practical political direction it is proposed to follow.

If we introduce all this before discussing *En Anden*, it is not because this novel relies on familiarity with contemporary events as *Livets Arabesk* did. Certainly *En Anden* relies on some knowledge of the contrasts of East and West, which were brought to the fore at this period, but the most essential aspect of *En Anden's* relationship to contemporary life is less direct. It can be viewed as a contribution to a running intellectual debate, as the expression of a certain attitude, even though there is no desire expressed in the text to be drawn into such a debate. Irrespective however of the author's immediate intention, the meaning and significance of the novel are better understood in this light and the debate is also more generally relevant to Kristensen's development, visible through comparison of all three novels.

Treating, among other things, questions of subjective comprehension of the self and the world outside, *En Anden* must be linked to debate among intellectuals going on simultaneously and "behind" immediate literary and political preoccupations. The analogy between this debate on the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity and the political choice of "individualism" or "socialism" led to their being associated. The epistemological opposition was lent overtones of a political opposition. Thus the apparent lack of contact between *En Anden* and the social context in which it was written is broken down. Herbert Iversen, who was a central figure in the philosophical debate and had also been an active political worker, bridged the gap. As he had maintained, writing and publishing a book is a political act, irrespective of its apparent apolitical contents. It will be worthwhile to look more closely at the debate, because of its importance both for Kristensen's work and for the changes of opinion and allegiance throughout the 1920s among intellectuals and artists.

Epistemology and politics

Hvad hjalp de fremmede ting ham? Hvad hjalp de gamle ting ham? Charbin eller Københavner? Det var alt-sammen ydre ting, som funkledede, lyste og larmede; men

bag dem lå det evigt tomme rum. Og inden i ham lå dette uforståelige jeg, som ved at flygte for sig selv blot fulgte sin egen lov.
(*En Anden* Chap 16)

We saw in the discussion of *Livets Arabesk* that new work in philosophy and the natural sciences, Bergson and Einstein, suggested the old conceptions of reality were inadequate. Bergson in particular seemed to reach a wide audience in Copenhagen³⁵. His work conceived the external world not as a composition of separate objects, but as a totality. The fact that it seems separated into different objects is due to the way our perception functions. Similarly, he suggested that our experience is in fact a totality, though in practice we perceive it as divided into parts. Therefore we normally live at the level of division, but there is an unsuspected, truer core. Thus, though rejecting simple determinist use of behaviour, he asserted that past and present are bound together at a deeper level:

On peut donc concevoir la succession sans la distinction, et comme une pénétration mutuelle, une solidarité, une organisation intime d'éléments, dont chacun, représentative du tout, ne s'en distingue et ne s'en isole que pour une pensée capable d'abstraire.
(*Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience. Œuvres. 1959 p.68*)

In *En Anden*, Rasmussen also contrasts the superficial and the truer, deeper levels; he too believes in some kind of core of the self:

Hvad skulle de andre med ham? Hvorfor skulle de omforme det uforståelige, som var hans inderste jeg, i meninger og stiv livsanskuelse?³⁶

Bergson's work also helps us to understand the significance of the construction of *En Anden*: the division of chapters into a narrative and Journal, interconnected in certain ways. Rasmussen's past shows itself first to the reader and then to Rasmussen himself in his

³⁵ Bergson's reputation brought full audiences to Frithjof Brandt's public lectures in 1918, which were repeated in order to satisfy the wide-spread interest.

³⁶ Put in a popularly comprehensible fashion, Bergson's thought looks similar:

I hvert menneske findes to Slags Jeg, det egentlige dybe Jeg, der staar i intim Forbindelse med selve Livstrømmen, samt Skygge Jeg'et eller Handlings Jeg'et, der er det sociale Element i Menneskenaturen, vendt udad mod Ting og Begivenheder.
(Viggo Cavling: "Bergsons *Den Rene Bevidsthed*" Politiken 17 January 1918)

present. Slowly he begins to use the past to account for the way he is and acts in the present. Compare this with Bergson:

En réalité le passé se conserve de lui-même, automatiquement. Tout entier, sans doute, il nous suit à tout instant (...) Le mécanisme cérébral est précisément fait pour en refouler la presque totalité dans l'inconscient et pour n'introduire dans la conscience que ce qui est de nature à éclairer la situation présente ...
(*L'Évolution Créatrice. Œuvres* 1959 p.498)

In the last chapter of *En Anden*, for example, Rasmussen realises the similarity between particular things that had happened to him in the East and events from his childhood in Copenhagen. The last sentence of the Bergson quotation above might be an abstraction from that situation. Of course, we do not have to bring these two passages together, and we do not want to postulate influence from Bergson. The point is that familiarity with Bergson helps us to understand the implications of what is happening to Rasmussen in *En Anden*.

Freud's view of the workings of the inner world of the individual is clearly also useful. His five lectures on psychoanalysis (1909) and on dreams (1901) were published in Danish translation by Otto Gelsted in 1920, but his name was still new in Denmark and his work unfamiliar. Like Bergson, Freud draws attention to the individual's deeper level of experience and discovers the unconscious under continuing significance of the apparently buried past. He too uses the opposition of subject and object, imagination and reality, but studies each first term in order to understand the second. The reader of *En Anden* can only understand the reality of Rasmussen's past through his self-analysis. Furthermore, the emphasis on Rasmussen's earliest childhood, on his memories betraying the first signs of sexuality - attraction to Klara, jealousy of his mother, fear of her relationship with Samuelsen - this emphasis is best understood in the light of Freud's work³⁷.

³⁷ In the essay "I det freudske Klima" (*Den evige Uro*, 1958), Kristensen writes about Gelsted's introduction of Freud into Denmark, and of his own first reading:

Det maa have været i sommeren 1922, da jeg lige var vendt hjem fra mit Østentrip og oppe i Gribskov sad og skrev paa min kinesiske digtsamling, at en af mine venner fandt bogen til mig, og den overbeviste mig straks om, at det, man glemte, det, man fortrængte, kunne udvikle sig til noget meget farligt, ligesom drømmesymbolerne bekræftede mine anelser om, at ikke alene drømme, men ogsaa handlinger, ja, hele et menneskes liv var symboler. At denne bog blev en af

We turn now to Herbert Iversen's work, which was well known at the time in Denmark. It had caused some sensation at the time of publication, 1918, because of its originality and the personality of the author. He was not part of the academic establishment, but had written in his spare time while working in industry in England and America. Yet his work was lectured on at the university. His *To Essays om vor Erkendelse*³⁸, subjugating epistemology under the study of psychology, deny the validity of anything but subjective knowledge. Even this certainty is limited to the passing moment: one can be sure of nothing beyond what one experiences at this moment. Iversen rejects the opposition of subject and object:

Som jævnt Menneske må jeg på Forhånd betragte enversomhelst Påstand om *objektiv* (modsat subjektiv og momentan) *Gyldighed* af en menneskelig, tidsbestemt lille Antagelse som tomt Fantasteri. Den være sig nok så "klar", nok så "sikker", nok så evident: den er "kun" en bestemt Persons Oplevelse til et bestemt Klokkeslet (...) Men der er, for min personlige Smag, noget usundt eller usobert i selve denne filosofiske Distinktion *subjektiv-objektiv*, som dog savner enhveromhelst psykologisk Hjemmel.

(*To Essays om vor Erkendelse* p.121)

Thus for him all knowledge is framed within reference to introspection and, going beyond Freudian and Bergsonian thought, he renews the link with Berkeley and Hume³⁹. Again, there is no question of suggesting that this passage has to be linked with *En Anden*. It is only important that *En Anden* forms part of and tacitly relies on the well-known contemporary complex of challenge to accepted ideas. Iversen's wording suggest that one such idea is that self and reality exist independently, externally to each other; knowledge of reality is an "object" appended to reality and absorbed by the thinking "subject". For he feels obliged to anticipate his

tilskyndelserne til, at jeg udarbejdede barndomsskildringen *En Anden* er en kendsgerning (...)

The wording of the last sentence should warn us against simply equating and postulating Freudian symbolism and the like. The quotation nonetheless supports the use of Freudian thought to understand the standpoint and implications of *En Anden*.

³⁸ Kristensen wrote in *Aabenhjertige Fortielser* (1966 p.127) that he read Iversen's work on the boat which took him to the East in 1922.

³⁹ Iversen's affiliation with Berkeley was noticed by contemporaries, (for example by Jørgen Fr. Jørgensen in his review in *Politiken* 25 March 1919), and Berkeley's name appears independently elsewhere, for example in Harald Schelderup's article "Dostojevski og Nietzsche" (*Litteraturen* 1 1918 p. 370). Kristensen also stresses his importance for him at this period in his essay "Det skabende Øje" (*Det skabende Øje* 1956 p.118).

reader's objections to the "insignificance" of subjective knowledge and its "only" momentary validity:

Når jeg siger "kun" og "intetsomhelst andet og mere end", mener jeg ikke hermed noget nedsættende, ringeagtende. Der er for mig intet lavt deri, at al mentalt liv (og dermed al logisk-matematisk Tænken) er *tidsligt*, eller deri, at hverken jeg eller andre Mennesker kan springe over vore egne Skygger og krybe ud af vor egen Hud og blive Ikke-Mennesker.

(*To Essays om vor Erkendelse* p.121)

This helps us to understand that Rasmussen's eventual realisation that he can trust in nothing but his self presupposes a break with assumptions that the subjective is unreliable and uncertain. For Rasmussen, it is blind trust in the incomprehensible:

Det var altsammen ydre ting, som funkede, lyste og larmede; men bag dem lå det evigt tomme rum. Og inden i ham lå dette uforståelige jeg, som ved at flygte for sig selv blot fulgte sin egen lov.

(Chap. 16)

Here, as we shall see in more detail later, he trusts in the subjective because it is his only existential basis. We find the same thing in a popular form which suggests that this is the "new" conception of life:

Subjektiviteten er Sandheden!

(Viggo Cavling in his discussion of Einstein, where he also refers to and compares with Iversen and Bergson. *Politiken* 5 December 1919)

It is interesting that each of these three thinkers takes as illustration to his argument aspects of a writer's relationship to his work. Bergson feels that because language is public property, it cannot communicate the subtleties of the individual's deep experience. For, in the process of being formulated in public language, the experience is made to conform to certain categories and loses its individuality. The novelist, he says, has to try to break through these limits in language. Iversen also speaks of the writer's need to recreate what is only momentary experience through the use of language:

En Ord-kunstner, en Poet ønsker (...) ved sine Ord og Tegn at genfremkalde visse Indstillinger netop som de var; og hans Kunst er ved passende Midler, at forberede særlige Situationer gunstige for disse og ugunstige for andre Indstillinger Fremdukken.

(*To Essay om vor Erkendelse* p.149)

Finally, Freud suggests that to write literature is to enter into a special relationship with the environment which the writer feels is hostile to him. By working out in his writing the needs of his

imagination, the writer manages to come to terms with his reality. What is important for us, is that in all three cases literature is considered to be a creation entirely dependent on the writer's imagination; it is dependent on the subject. Then, from Freud's point of view, the text establishes a reconciliation with reality because it becomes itself reality.

This is important because it points the way to a certain interpretation of *En Anden*. At the end of the novel, we find the following passage:

Han ville ikke læse dem (et bundt papirer), han ville blot blade i dem og derved fornemme sit liv, sådan som han havde givet det form på disse papir.

(Chap. 16)

We shall see that its meaning is that Rasmussen has created an autobiographical but imagined account of his past and that his creation is more real for him than external reality.

At this point we must digress briefly. We shall see that the modes of thought behind Rasmussen's need to write are implicitly contrasted with general oriental attitudes. Under oriental influence, Rasmussen glimpses, without fully appreciating, the futility of religious worship and of the belief in the saving power of art; the "reality" of his autobiography is undermined. Furthermore there are different conceptions of the individual in the orient, but again Rasmussen does not fully appreciate or accept them. "The Dane" exemplifies however that proper acceptance is possible, whereas the figure of Samuelsen serves to exemplify the more ridiculous, superficial attempts to adopt Oriental philosophies. Clearly, in the casual reference to Theosophy and the minimal explanation of Oriental thought, *En Anden* relies on contemporary trends. There was considerable interest in fashionable cults of adapted eastern philosophies and a lot of news about political events in both India and China. There were large audiences and public lectures on Theosophy and much interest in spiritualism. In 1921 an International Congress on spiritualism was held in Copenhagen; in 1920 Edv. Lehmann had published a critical introduction to Theosophy, *Oplysninger om Teosofien*. In 1920, the Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore's visit to the University of Copenhagen was a central event on the literary scene. On the political front, Gandhi's passive rebellion in India and the revolution and counter revolution in China filled the newspapers of the early 1920s. Thus, in a sense, the subject matter of *En Anden* reflects the interests of the time as well as being an obvious result of Kristensen's tour to the east. He was moreover one of several intellectuals and poets who made such exotic journeys, helping to nourish interest in areas which had been forgotten during the war years.

Post-war reactions to what was called subjectivism, relativism, scepticism or nihilism, can be traced back to include a public debate between two philosophers, Severin Christensen and Jørgen Fr. Jørgensen, in 1918. Bergson and a fashionable German philosopher came under attack, and Jørgensen produced a popular formula as his conclusion: "Objektiviteten er Sandheden" (in "Om Grundlaget for Sev. Christensen's Livsfilosofi" *Vor Tid* 2 1918 p.676). This should be compared with the opposing formula summarising the relativist point of view quoted above.

By the middle years of the 1920s, subjectivism and other "-isms" were being attacked on more directly political grounds, above all by the people associated with *Kritisk Revy*. Otto Gelsted was one of these, and he concentrated on theoretical discussions of the arts. Looking at several of Gelsted's writings, we can see particularly clearly how the epistemological questions acquired political overtones. In 1919, he argues that, in painting, the value and innovation of expressionism is to emphasise the individual's perception of reality:

En hvilkensomhelst objektivt foreliggende Figur kan opleves paa forskellige Maader.

(p. 15)

Mens Impressionismen helt gjorde sig til ét med det umiddelbare Sanseindtryk, har Ekspressionismen ensidigt lagt Vægten paa den Følelse og Fantasi, hvormed Kunstneren indføler sig i Virkeligheden og omdanner den i sit Billede.

(p. 36)

In his argument, he cites both Sev. Christensen and Iversen and he describes art as a process of perception and re-creation of reality ("indføle" and "omdanne"). He is clearly on the side of "subjectivism".

Expressionism and subjectivism were criticised inevitably by people outside the circle of adherents, but also more significantly from within the circles of associates. Already in the second year of *Klingen's* existence, Poul Henningsen called for less subjectivism; the issue is still limited to the theories of art:

Det er galt at stille den menneskelige Følelse op som Betingelse for Kunstydelsen (...) Vi maa som Videnskaben bort fra det menneskelige og subjektive. Kun i det umenneskelige og Trangen til Abstraktion kan der spores et Fremskridt og gøres et Arbejde, hvis Facit ikke som nu ved enhver Opgørelse bliver nul.

("Betragtninger om Kunst" in *Klingen* 2 No. 9)

In the debate which followed, Gelsted was on Henningsen's side. Developing the argument, he says three components of a work of art – "Realitet, Personlighed, Struktur" – must form the basis of all discussion. He rejects "subjective" Expressionism because it exaggerates the personality component, and argues for "cubism" which is a more balanced union of the subjective and the objective. He concludes:

Det er ikke Romantik og Intuition, vi trænger til, hverken i Videnskab eller Kunst, men Klarhed over Kunstens og Videnskabens Betingelser. Derfor ser jeg i Kubismen en sund og metodisk rigtig Retning. Mens Ekspressionismen er symbolsk, literær og romantisk, har Kubismen radikalt søgt at udskille al Symbolik og Fortælling af Maleriet til Fordel for et systematisk og haardt tiltrængt Arbejde med de særlige maleriske Værdier, Linie, Farve, Form, billedmæssig Balance.

("Om Ekspressionisme og Kubisme i Litteraturen"
Litteraturen III 1920-21 p.402)

His rejection of "intuition" is a reaction against Bergson's *L'Évolution Créatrice*, which had been used in defence of modern painting. Gelsted wants to return to the Kantian tradition⁴⁰. The change is

⁴⁰ In the discussion of *Livets Arabesk*, we suggested that Bønnelycke's public and Kristensen's private declarations of allegiance to some kind of objectivism are in line with Gelsted's theoretical writings, in line with expressionism, but we can now modify that by saying that their objectivism resembles what Gelsted in the article under discussion calls cubism. The preoccupation remains centred on questions of form, not subject matter, and not moral consideration. Another illustration from another interview with Kristensen in 1922, on the occasion of the publication of *Paafuglefjeren*, indicates that his use of the concept of objectivity is reserved for questions of style. He contrasts a lyricism of outburst with an "epic" treatment, but the content remains the same, the poet's mood in reaction to stimulus. He speaks of transposition, resetting, (omsætte), but not of essential change:

Kina var Oplevelsen, men det var ikke Mylderet, og det var heller ikke Farvene, jeg blev begejstret over, det har jeg alt sammen drømt lige saa voldsomt, det er som Tilværelses Love er sluppet løs derude og dog var det især den kinesiske Kontemplation, der betog mig, det tror jeg ogsaa har paavirket mine Digte, de er ved at naa det episke nu, de fleste er skikkelsesdannende, og alle Stemningerne er objektiverede, som vel i alle mine Digte.

Det direkte og Stemningsudbruddet bli'r mig mere og mere fremmed. Jeg maa selv omsætte.

("Paafuglefjeren" *Akademisk Ungdom* November 1922)

The reserving claim, "som vel i alle mine Digte", indicates that this is no new method, and that the new is in the use of figures, "skikkelsesdannende", of some reality, rather than the dream of *Fribytterdrømme*.

present in terms of epistemological opposition, but it is now linked to moral concern for modern society's needs. The "we" with which he begins is symptomatic of his concern.

In 1923 the so-called "Livsanskuellesdebat" began. By 1924, Gelsted felt he had to intervene by publishing his magazine *Sirius*, in which he attacked more openly the subjectivism manifested in Harald Westergaard's Christianity and Oluf Thomsen's biological materialism (Westergaard and Thomsen, *Livsanskuelse* 1923). He argues for the alternative of Kant's conception of synthesis as the essential function of consciousness. This, he says, is a common human basis for universal cultural values:

Den Opfattelse, jeg nu skal fremstille, et et Forsøg paa at redde os ud af Subjektivismens Virvar og over paa Objektivismens faste Grund.

("Om Livsanskuelse" *Sirius* No 1, October 1924)

Thomsen's view of modern man reminds us of Rasmussen's perception of a coherence around him:

(Enhver af os) ved vel, at alt i Verden er usikkert, at vor Opfattelse er svigefuld, vor Vurdering kun af relativ og ikke af absolut Værdi. Alt det ved han, men han har, eller kan naa til at faa den trygge Følelse, at hvert Skridt han gør, er i Sammenhæng og Overensstemmelse med de foregaaende (...)

("Livsanskuelse" p.15)

The means of attaining a sense of coherence and comfort which Thomsen then describes appears "subjective" to Gelsted. Rasmussen in *En Anden* is even more subjective. Because he finds his comfort within his own self. Therefore it is clear that *En Anden* must be considered to oppose the "objectivists" among contemporary intellectuals. In addition, by emphasising the importance of introspective art and the autobiographical form, the novel is in opposition to growing pressure on the artist to turn outwards towards society. Gelsted was also representative here:

Før det bevidste Arbejde med selve Kunstværket begynder, maa gaa et bevidst Arbejde med almindelig Orientering. Digteren skal trænge gennem Tidens blendende og larmende Overflade ind til de kaotiske og ordnende Kræfter, der rører sig i Tidens Dyb.

("Det Bevidste og Ubevidste i Kunsten" *Sirius* p.153)

As a representative figure and an accepted authority among his like-minded fellows, Gelsted unites the theoretical argument for "objective art" with a practical, political call for art which analyses social forces. Increasingly the social orientation became socialist and opposed liberalist individualism. By going in the opposite direction, *En Anden* becomes a political statement, whether it and

its author will not. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the union of "objectivism" and some kind of socialism is not an absolute necessity, but rather a chance of circumstance: the simultaneous reaction against expressionist painting and rise of economic and social problems. This point is illustrated by the fact that Herbert Iversen had been a leading "subjectivist" thinker and also a socialist. He argued that since there are no "objective" criteria of truth and validity, the "objective" authority of social institutions is illusory and therefore easier to go overthrow if no longer adequate for the present state of the world. However the association of objectivism and socialism became more and more marked and a definite attitude in intellectual circles as the 1920s progressed. *En Anden* was written and published at the moment when people were beginning consciously to define their positions, at the point when questions of art theory were beginning to gain their political associations. By the time *Hærværk* was written, attitudes had become so definite and conscious that they push themselves into the text. It is possible to argue that *En Anden* betrays no awareness of its political significance. We shall return to this.

In conclusion and as an anticipation of the discussion of *Hærværk*, we note a call for tendentious writing which became louder as the decade drew to an end and which has an implicit condemnation of *En Anden* and Rasmussen's autobiographical preoccupation:

(Tiden) siger: Du skal tage Parti, du skal gribe og gribes af en Idé, der er mig, du skal kæmpe for denne Idé (...)
Der sidder Mænd rundt om i Landet og skriver Bøger, unge Mænd og gamle. De skriver Bøger, der er ens, fordi alle handler om Forfatteren og fortæller det om ham, der er hans egen ludfattige, men altopslugende Tilværelse – og som ikke rager Omverdenen.
(Jesper Ewald: "Den unge Litteratur" *Tilskueren* 1924 1 p.35).

Analysis of the text

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is evident even from a superficial acquaintance with the subject matter that *En Anden* is symptomatic of narrowed interests. The author turns his attention towards the individual's inner world, where some others were concentrating on the social world. Comparison with the wide range of characters, problems and events in *Livets Arabesk* also indicates that the author has reduced his personal breadth of vision. There he had described social movements for their own sake, here society is no more than necessary backcloth. The existential problems are developed there in conjunction with social attitudes, but here they

are the focus of interest within an almost total social vacuum. For here the main character lives in an alien environment which does not care about him.

Even though in its particular context, as we have seen, concentration of interest is liable to be interpreted as politically reactionary, we must be open to the text's claims on its own terms. The significance of its treatment of ideas depends, especially where there is only one main character, on his representative stature. The novel's description of how one person experiences problems which are timeless and universal must have relevance beyond the one person. By making this demand, we are representing the viewpoint of the critical reader rather than the text's, we are introducing criteria of quality into the process of interpretation. This will be justified because it makes us aware of a certain ambiguous attitude in the text on the part of the writer, who seems to doubt the worth of his main character, Rasmussen.

Rasmussen as a representative figure

Valdemar Rasmussen's only rationally prepared action in his life was to leave his patron, Richard Dam. This led him indirectly back to the East. It was the result of an isolated flash of self-recognition:

Jeg blev pludselig fyldt af lede ved mig selv. Altid var jeg for svag og blev skubbet i det forkerte kammer; men det var mig selv, som var skyldt i det (...) Jeg kunne ikke gå frem og gribe livet i struben og tvinge det bagover. Kun med latteren havde jeg en gang for længe siden besejret nogle drenge, hvad var det nu, de hed?

(Chap. 15)

He recognises his own moral weakness, but it is evident that this in turn is due at least partly to his physical weakness as a child. He compensated for the sense of isolation he consequently felt by making a role and a mask out of a chance remark; a girl had called him 'sly' (lumsk). The role and mask – usually he becomes a "clown" – become his characteristic mode of existence. In the passage quoted above, he remembers that he had used laughter to attack other people. He had begun by chance, to mock his enemy Charles and realised the power of mockery:

Jeg blev farlig, fordi jeg gjorde mine kammerater til grin. Latteren var mit nye våben, og dets smidighed og dets uberegnelighed passede godt for en dreng uden kræfter.

(Chap. 7)

The last words emphasise the significance of physical weakness. The clown's mask is also a defence to hide behind and to observe other people from:

De var forfærdede over den unge mand, som var beruset, og den unge mand det var mig, og det var mig, som var ved at gå i hundene. Det var vidunderligt.

(Chap.12)

The use of the third person conveys the hiding and observing, but the role also gives him the pleasure of attracting attention, which is otherwise denied him. Eventually however he has to realise that the clown is the real fool, that people laugh cynically and mockingly and that because he is not taken seriously, he misses first-hand experience. At the moment of self-recognition cited above, he feels all this as the sense of being always in the wrong room. The vicarious experience of the wrong room is a later manifestation of a childhood trait, for he had always depended on others to provide him with the experience. This was his relationship with Sejr:

Ham blev jeg meget hengiven, for han oplevede mere end jeg. Hans fortællinger udvidede og uddybede verden, men gjorde mit eget jeg lille og fattigt. Selve min evne til at opleve mistede sin kraft, syntes jeg, og derfor blev jeg forfalden til at høre på ham.

(Chap. 5)

He begins to realise that his capacity for initiative, rather than passive acceptance, is threatened. Later, in China, he attempts to break free of his old life, but his passivity remains and even matures in the atmosphere of the East. On the one occasion that he shakes off his inertia, to disperse the crowd of beggars outside the customs buildings (Chap. 7), it is as a result of necessity and then of the discovery that he is stronger than his opponents. Otherwise, moral and physical lethargy remain basic traits of Rasmussen's character.

The need to attract attention, which the clown's role covers, is a symptom of another fundamental aspect of Rasmussen's life: his sense of loneliness. As a child he is ignored by other children, at school he has to befriend Charles, who is also an outcast in the class. More decisively, his mother's attempted suicide breaks his attachment to her, and leaves him only doubtful refuge in Samuelsen:

Jeg følte mig atter ensom. Mor var den fremmede dame, som jeg ikke følte mig tryk hos. Kunne jeg ikke bedre lide Samuelsen? Kunne jeg mon ikke?

(Chap. 4)

His loneliness is sometimes a feeling of being abandoned, lost in the crowd. This common image is given a new dimension because the crowd is seen through a child's eyes. First he feels abandoned by

the adults' world, when he is beaten by the milk-boy: "Der var ingen hjælp, skønt der var så mange mennesker i nærheden" (Chap. 4). Then the same cruelty is discovered in the children's world, for when threatened by boys from another street, he finds no help in his own group: "Jeg så mig angst omkring efter hjælp ... men de veg alle til side og der blev et tomt rum om mig og de to drenge" (Chap. 5). After his mother's death, Rasmussen has to rely entirely on Samuelsen, and feels even more lonely.

In China, Rasmussen feels, as a European among countless Chinese, isolated in another way and he hopes to escape by returning to Denmark. He tells his friend "the Dane" that he feels no connection with the Orient, but he is not any more connected with the few Europeans around him. The recognition is forced on him by the discovery that his friends, Scott and May, are deceiving him:

Han tog en rickshaw og lod den køre uden mål. Han ville døve sig ved synet af den by, han elskede (...) Men lydene var fremmede, musikken var uforståelig skingren, og all menneskes ansigter var ham fjerne. Han så hvide mænd og hvide kvinder, han så kinesere; men han var alene.

(Chap. 13)

Thus, although he had hoped to break away from himself and his former life, his life in China is essentially the same. He flees but he remains isolated. The Dane tells him that flight is not the same as escape, but at best a way of cheating by ignoring problems:

"Snyder De ikke livet ved også at ville flygte fra Charbin, endda før De er kommet dertil. Stedet er da ganske ligegyldigt!"

(Chap. 14)

This desire to flee is also fundamental in Rasmussen's character. It is partly a result of his physical and moral weakness, for as a boy he always ran away from those stronger than himself. When he is faced with the pain of seeing his mother in hospital he also runs, trying to escape from the vision:

Det smertede, og hver gang billedet af min syge mor med det fortrinnede blik skød sig frem i min erindring, gav jeg mig til at løbe i et dunkelt håb om at kunde undslippe.

(Chap. 11)

Then, at the death of his mother, in a moment of clarity, he also decides to run, to escape. This is an important and ultimately ironic passage, because he wants here to escape the determining influence of his past on his future:

Det stod mig klart, jeg måtte søge det fremmede for at undslippe mig selv. Hvad skulle jeg med en fortid, som voldte mig sorg, og hvad skulle jeg med en fremtid, der var bestemt af den fortid?

(Chap. 11)

The irony lies in the fact that the novel is constructed to show that it is not possible to escape, and also that writing his autobiography helps Rasmussen to establish some link of past and present and an unchanging identity, which becomes his final refuge. Flight is itself part of his identity, of the link of past and present. And flight is for him an end in itself, which gives him the restfulness he had sought.

Loneliness and escape to what he calls repose (ro) are both part of Rasmussen's character and part of the general human condition. It will be worthwhile to look more carefully at the way they are described. We saw that the image of the crowded but anonymous street has implications beyond the immediate description, and this image is deepened. After leaving Samuelsen, Rasmussen lives in the street, and the cruelty he feels exposed to there becomes symptomatic of all "life". He finds the refuge afforded by a café reassuring, he feels sheltered there from "life, which was so difficult to overcome". Therefore when forced to return to wandering the streets, he is being forced back into ordinary living, into city life:

Ude på gaden slå en tristhed in over mig, og jeg mindedes hver dag mors angst for de mange sten, sten under fødderne, sten op langs siderne. Han gik som nede på bunden af en stenkasse, og man måtte hele tiden holde sig oprejst. Lagde man sig ned på fortovet for at hvile, ville mennesker samle sig rundt om een og le. Der var bænke; men der var langt imellem dem, altfor langt (...) Gaden var ubarmhjertig.

(Chap. 14)

In another passage, this merciless indifference is carried to its oriental extreme. There, not even death can claim sympathy or attention – not even the hypocritical sympathy Rasmussen's relatives produce at his mother's funeral. As he rides in a rickshaw, he sees a body lying in the street:

Der gik folk forbi. De skottede hen til liget og fortsatte roligt deres gang. Der blev intet opløb, ingen standsning. Der var blot et tomt rum om den døde, en lys plet i den brogede trafik.

(Chap. 11)

Rasmussen's loneliness, though accentuated in his character, is symptomatic of common human isolation and estrangement. We cannot touch each other or help each other. Richard Dam uses another image:

“Vi kan ikke hjælpe hinanden. Vi er allesammen mennesker uden hænder.”
(Chap. 15)

The dead Chinese looked as though he were shouting an appeal, but nobody can hear or reply.

In the description of the dead Chinese a phrase is used – “et tomt rum om den døde” – which links with an oft-returning image in the novel. The individual, isolated from other people, feels as though he were living in a vacuum. For example, Rasmussen is left alone after breaking his one friendship:

Jeg var kun venner med Sejr, og derfor drev jeg rundt i et tomt rum, og blev gradvist tiltrukket af en berygtet dreng
(Chap. 6)

The metaphorical use of this phrase is also linked to the image of the anonymous street and to its implication of social estrangement, (Chap. 14). Its importance is that it is also used literally, and that the literal and metaphorical meanings are thus brought together. Literally, "empty space" is how Rasmussen sees the universe. Though this view originated in a reasoned account of the universe, it is something more as well, for Rasmussen *feels* and is continually aware that he exists within the emptiness of space. He feels that this is the ultimate condition to which he must refer his experience. Thus his loneliness and estrangement among men is connected with his sense of months of isolation in an empty universe. (We saw something similar in *Livets Arabesk*.) Yet in fact there is no justification for linking these two experiences beyond the fact that they are felt by the same individual - Rasmussen and, ultimately, Tom Kristensen. We must accept this and be willing to make the connection, but it remains a weakness because the novel does not convince the reader that the link is real and experienced.

Let us however look at Rasmussen's sensation of living in an empty universe independently of his life of contact with people. This is a sensation which we saw in *Livets Arabesk* and which we shall find again in *Hærværk*. It is evidently an important part of Kristensen's own experience and we want to know how he communicates it through his novel's characters. The origin of Rasmussen's sensation is in rational argument, for it is a schoolteacher who persuades him that it is wrong to imagine oneself existing at the centre of a finite universe. He had ritualised its finite nature as a high surrounding wall. In contrast to this image, the incomprehensible nature of infinity is suggested by his teacher through the use of negatives:

“... sådan er det med himlen. Den er ikke blå og ikke rund. Den ser bare sådan ud. Rummet er ikke rundt og

ikke firkantet. Det er uendeligt.”

(Chap. 8)

Infinity first becomes a meaningful concept however when the Rasmussen begins to realise that it contains implications for his normal way of living. From childhood he had imagined himself and the world he knew were the centre of the universe, and in fact his final act in the novel is to make of his self a counterbalance to the annihilating force of infinity. His first available memory of childhood anticipates this:

Tilfældigvis husker jeg mit første verdensbillede. Det var brudstykkeagtigt, og der var farlige elementer i det; men jeg havde den gang håbet om, at det ville vokse sammen til en helhed med mig selv som midtpunkt, når jeg blev ti år gammel.

(Chap. 1)

His first response when he became aware of the vastness of space was to try to encompass it within his imagination. Thus he would have overcome it and made it finite, but in fact the attempt only makes him more sharply aware of the meaning of infinity:

Rummet var for stort; jeg var for lille; og alligevel skulle rummet ind i mig ...

Og nu var jeg ude i rummet. Min hjerne stod stille; men min krop fløj; den følte, hvad jeg ikke kunne forestille mig. Rummet blev omsat i sanseindtryk.

(Chap. 8)

Afraid of the physical sensation described here, he begins to trust in the security of God who envelopes and therefore denies the meaning of infinity. The boy imagined God sitting on the highest surrounding wall. When he is confirmed, however, his trust is deceived for he does not get the proof of God's existence he had expected. Space is suddenly empty and then infinite:

Hvor var da Gud? Hvor skulle sin sjæl flyve hen? Rummet var uendeligt, og han - var Gud en han? - kunne være til højre eller til venstre; men højre og venstre, op og ned, det var ikke ude i rummet -

(Chap. 10)

Christianity is no use to him, nor is Samuelsen's theosophy, as he learns later. The final rejection of religious systems and much later in Richard Dam's words. Dam sums up Rasmussen's experience although he is talking about himself. His words also show that negative terms are the only adequate ones to describe space and its implications for the individual. Other "solutions" are false:

“Sådan er religionerne også. Det er bare himmerig. Det er bare helved. Det er bare hades. Det er bare nirwana. Som om noget *bare* kunne fylde rummet (...) Det er bare retfærdighed. Det er bare mening. Det er bare

stræben. Altsammen. Jeg ved kun, at ingen af dem er stor nok. Rummet æder dem alle."
(Chap. 15)

For Rasmussen, the implications of existing in infinity are that his life loses all meaning. He feels his life is fragmentary, incoherent and meaningless. Again the most exact abstract formulation is Richard Dam's, who sees meaninglessness in the same way as he describes the inadequacy of religious systems. Meaning, he says, is a human invention, like justice, and space is faster than them both. As actual experience, however, Rasmussen's sense of meaninglessness is not immediately linked to infinity, but is forced on him by his own interpretation of his life. Dam's words are only a rationalisation of what Rasmussen had felt. His earliest memory, we saw, was a sense that life was fragmentary; he hoped that the future would bring coherence. The parts which should be related into a whole remains arbitrary and accidental:

Jeg husker første gang, en verden gled ud af hænderne på mig (...) Jeg oplevede jo, at livet er et brudstykke, uforståeligt, fordi det knækker over på et tilfældigt sted.
(Chap 4.)

Even the coming of death is arbitrary and seems therefore meaningless, for if death were a proper ending, it would imply that life had been some kind of progression:

Døden havde altid virket på Valdemar som en meningsløs tilfældighed. Aldrig havde han oplevet, at livet havde afrundet sig naturligt.
(Chap. 11)

Therefore the whole of existence, life and death, remains incoherent and fragmented. This is his sense of the material from which he writes his autobiography.

Writing his memories helps Rasmussen to recognise the moments which divide and change the external course of his life. In China such a moment arises when he is posted to a new area. He compares these external changes with changes in people around him. For example, when he hears that he may be posted to Hong Kong, he is invaded by the feeling that things are constantly changing: "Alting forvandlede sig medens han så på det, syntes han." He remembers that the first arbitrary break was when he moved from his first home to a new flat and this leads him to think of the changes people also underwent - Fontane and his own mother, for example. He does not see that it was his view of them which had changed. Then the memory makes him realise how he himself is constantly changing:

Af mig selv havde jeg mange billeder, som Guds søn, som lumsk, som god, som uartig; men jeg følte endnu ikke, at det betød forvandling. De var dukket op i mig i en broget rækkefølge.

(Chap. 4)

In fact the changes he sees in himself are really only changes of roles he had adopted. Eventually he recognises, as he sits in the train to Charbin, that there is behind the various roles and situations a more essential repetition. By presuming that this betrays a continuing basic identity, and by finding comfort in it, he seizes on what he had originally tried to escape from. For he had tried to escape the repetition of precarious experience, the sense of always being in the wrong room:

Altid var jeg for svag og blev skubbet in i det forkerte kammer; men det var mig selv, som var skyld i det. Livet var mangfoldigt. Blot i mit eget forbandede jeg kastede livet det samme hæslige spejlbillede og gentog det! Blot i mig blev det gentagelse!

(Chap. 15)

What he had fled from as a weakness becomes a proof of something durable in the midst of fragmentation and incoherence. It is important however to note that Rasmussen's experience of the world remains the same, fragmentary and incoherent:

Livet var som rindende vand. Spejlbilleder af mennesker og ting bølgede hen over det, undertiden usammenhængende og flimrende, undertiden blanke og klare.

(Chap. 16)

It is inevitable that this should be so, because Rasmussen continues to accept the implications of the existence in infinite space. The reality of this experience cannot be denied⁴¹.

⁴¹ The ultimate and essential meaninglessness of existence is one of the problems considered more fleetingly in *Livets Arabesk*.

In the context, the conception of the infinite emptiness of the universe and God's absence, problems with a long history, had been revived to contemporary significance by popularisation of new advances in natural sciences, particularly in Einstein's. Teleological problems, which Iversen already dispensed with (cf. *To Essays om vor Erkendelse* 1918 p.285), are central to the so-called "Livsanskuelsesdebat", that was beginning to develop by 1923. Gelsted had in 1990 discussed and rejected the validity of the foundation of emergent Dadaism, namely that existence is meaningless, and that art should not therefore pretend to meaning, (*Ekspressionisme* p.44). The need to feel a coherence in one's life, the refusal to accept the view of life as meaningless and arbitrary, and the search for a justification of these interpretations through belief in the Christian God, - these are central arguments and axioms in the contributions to the debate. For example, Harald Westergaard defines a philosophy of life as "at søge at klare sig, hvad meningen er med livet" (Westergaard and Thomsen *Livsanskuelse* 1923), and Ditlef Nielsen

We have so far seen that Valdemar Rasmussen incorporates a similar view of the essential aspects of life to what we found in *Livets Arabesk*. He gives expression to the view through his real and felt experience of it, and it is also formulated in more abstract terms. Meaninglessness, incoherence, lack of contact with people, the sense of the universe's empty infinity are the abstract features of his life. We began, however, from the question of Rasmussen's representative stature. It is clear that much of his experience, in particular his loneliness and lack of contact with the world around him is attributable to his moral and physical weakness. It is also clear that there is little convincing justification of the link of existential loneliness in an infinite universe with his particular individual experience. These two points weaken his representative stature, and particularly his weak character makes his response, his escape into the self, of doubtful general validity. We shall consider the question of response further and discover a certain ambiguity in the novel which betrays doubt in Kristensen's own attitude to Rasmussen, despite the latter's usefulness as a carrier of significant experience.

Rasmussen's "response" and the author's attitude towards him.

Rasmussen's most characteristic response to difficulty and dissatisfaction is to flee. His flight eastwards however introduces contrasting elements of western restiveness and eastern repose which are characteristic for two parts of his life, but which are also said to be typical of two different civilisations, European and Oriental. His break with Europe and attempt to settle in China take place within this larger contrast. It is typically European to question

explains that the need for revision of the old beliefs is caused by the modern, scientific view of the universe:

Nu er den faste Himmelhvæling styrtet sammen over vort Hoved, og vi stirrer med Forfærdelse op i det tomme Rum, hvor utalte Kloder svinger sig i deres evige Baner. Trygheden er forbi.

(*Den historiske Jesus* 1924 p.4)

We need hardly draw attention here to the presence of an essential phrase in Kristensen's vocabulary: "det tomme rum". Chr. Reventlow contests the arbitrary nature of existence:

At ogsaa jeg befinder mig i denne Endelighed, i dette timelige Liv, er givet. Men er det tilfældigt? Og hvad er iøvrigt denne Endeligheds Indhold og Væsen?

(*Breve fra Skærsilden* 1924 p.13)

the condition of existence, to search for continuity and coherence and these attitudes re-emerge in Rasmussen when he hears of his posting:

Valdemar var blevet europæer igen. Urolig og farlig. Tankerne jog tøjlesløst igennem ham, blot fordi han om nogle dage måske skulle gå syd på til Hong Kong for at passe på skibene fra Canton. Hele den ro, han troede at have vundet ved at vove springet ud til Asien, var borte.
(Chap. 4)

The contrasting Asiatic repose he is afraid of losing is passive, an attitude which excludes concern about oneself and others. It is the attitude which Rasmussen tries to adopt when he discovers that he has been deceived by his mistress, May:

Nej, han var rolig, var han ikke det? Han smilte asiatisk, gjorde han ikke? Han måtte være en helt anden, ikke sandt?
(Chap. 13)

This passive attitude also excludes concern about the implications of the infinite emptiness of space, that Rasmussen feels in the first chapter, for example. It is however also an attitude which is close to death, as becomes clear from the enormous passivity of the Ming tomb:

Dér lå bygningen foran dem. På en uforståelig måde bekræftede den, at rummet var tomhed, og at livets endelige mål var den ro, der hviler i tomheden. Det ville være så selvfølgeligt at gå der op, og uden lede ved livet kaste sig ud derfra.
(Chap. 8)

Eventually, through examining himself in his autobiography, Rasmussen recognises that he has failed to become absorbed into passive, oriental life.

He fails, for example, to understand that a body can be unheeded in a crowded street. He fails to feel part of the Chinese crowd, for he only feels isolation. He fails also to accept that death is the absolute consequence of the way of life in the Ming tomb. Unable to face the consequence, he characteristically seeks comfort in woman, May. It is characteristic too that he is deceived. May is taken by Scott, Emilie by Dam, Klara by Samuelsen and, as the origin of all, his mother is also taken by Samuelsen. Rasmussen hopes that woman will give him comfort in his isolation, but on each occasion he comes near to her, he finds only sensuality and betrayal. Even his mother seems to be reduced to a sensual companion for Samuelsen and he feels cheated:

Jeg følte, at hele kvarteret var usikkert, og jeg blev sørgmodig, hver gang jeg så en smuk dame. Gik de alle i

Samuelsens bagværelse ligesom fru Petersen, ligesom
frk. Lauritzen, ligesom – ligesom mor?
(Chap. 9)

Even his hope of establishing some coherent development in his life is fixed on a girl. Glimpsing her crossing the street, he recalls another chance meeting years before and believes that he is destined to meet her again in the future: "Der matte være sammenhæng i alt." But this is also a vain hope.

Rasmussen's most successful and satisfying response to his environment is to write down his memories, which become an autobiography. He begins to write when he believes he has successfully adopted oriental life, but the fact that he writes in order to make time pass suggests that he is not really adapted. Ultimately, in fact, the autobiography helps him to accept his deeper, now re-emerged European restiveness. As we examine the autobiography however, we shall see that it can only provide such help because it gains a doubtful relationship to "truth" and "reality". The autobiography shifts in the direction of imaginative literature. This is important because there is a hint of criticism of it in the construction of the novel, the hint which betrays a vague and inarticulate superior awareness on the part of the author.

The act of writing functions for Rasmussen as a means of discovering his unchanging self. We said that the fact that he feels the basic, repeated similarity of important incidents in his life is sufficient evidence of the existence of an unchanging core. This gives him enough assurance to continue and accept his life as it is, for the permanence of the self balances the meaninglessness of infinity. And hence his enigmatic last smile. In fact, the coherence and permanence he sees in his self is the result of his having organised his life in an autobiography. He had expected to feel some external influence directing and organising his life, but he has discovered that he must do it himself. He is willing to accept that he cannot fully understand his self - "dette uforståelige jeg" - but his discovery of repetition and the novel's structural juxtaposition, within each chapter, of events in China similar to events in childhood, suggest a deterministic view of the self. We saw that he tried to escape his past and its influence on present and future. When he realises that there can be no escape, and that continual flight is part of himself, he accepts implicitly the determination of his future by his past. For example, flight and moral incertitude are partly a result of his physical weakness; his sense of estrangement is a result of the time when he lost contact with his mother - after she had tried to kill herself and him⁴². Writing the autobiography

⁴² Nineteenth century determinism was revived and given a new dimension by Freud's work. Both Bergson and Iversen also argued for a

does not change his sense of estrangement but helps him to accept it as part of himself.

The fact that Rasmussen exaggerates this part of himself and finds in inward isolation from the external world the basis of his life, makes him essentially like Baumann. The dichotomy of inner and outer worlds in *Livets Arabesk* is found here in the dichotomy of the coherent autobiography and the fragmentation of external reality, or in the dichotomy of the subjectivity/objectivity debate in contemporary intellectual circles. There is no fusion here either; neither is there any connection with other people, with woman in particular. Consequently we learn in *En Anden* that the isolated self is presumably some intact core. The assumption that such a core really exists is essential to understanding *En Anden* and particularly *Hærværk*, where Jastrau turns away from the world and goes in search of his "soul". The contrast of superficial "opinions" with the deeper reality of the "soul" which is explored in *Hærværk*, is anticipated in *En Anden*⁴³:

Han følte same glæde over deres meninger, som et græsstrå må føle, når det bøjer sig for vinden, og selv om vinden det ene øjeblik er fra øst og det andet øjeblik fra vest, er græsstrået dog stadig sig selv.

Det bøjer sig kun.

Hvad skulle de andre med ham? Hvorfor skulle han omforme det uforståelige, som var hans inderste jeg, i meninger og stiv livsanskuelse?

(Chap. 5)

In order to establish the existence of the core of himself, however, Rasmussen slides from factual to imaginative, fictional autobiography. Even while thinking about the task of writing in the first chapter, he realises that details will inevitably be changed, although he insists that he will remain true to the essence of reality. Near the end, however, he recognises that unconsciously he has distorted the facts and, contrasting the opposed concepts, he says that he has written in half-truth and half fiction, or imagination (opdigtet). It is while contemplating the stone in front of the Summer Palace that he thinks of the past:

kind of determinism, modifying the rough ideas of simple determinism. Kristensen said that he was particularly interested by Freud's notion of sublimation and its dangerous effects, (cf. Note 37above).

⁴³ Svend Borberg's drama *Ingen* (1920) which was very successful in the early 1920s had a different conception of identity. It is shown that the self does not exist independently but is intimately connected with the external world and other people.

Og Valdemar tænkte på sin ungdom, som han havde prøvet på at finde ud af ved at skrive den ned. Det ene øjeblik syntes han, der var en bane; men det næste øjeblik så han mange furer, mange knuder, mange huller. Han opdagede huller, han hidtil havde overset. Han opdagede knuder, han ubevidst havde forstørret, og andre, han havde formindsket, og han vidste ikke, hvad der var sandt, og vad der ver opdigtet.

(Chap. 15)

The word "opdigtet" is important because it contrasts with truth and also because through it the autobiography is qualified as literature, "digtning". Other arts are also qualified as imaginative and said to be opposed to "reality", which is used as a synonym for truth. Through his tendency to play roles, first as a clown then as a painter, Rasmussen has affinity with Fontane, who is a professional actor and amateur painter. It is Fontane who recognises the artist in Rasmussen and states the fundamental contrast of artistic imagination and reality:

Ja, fantasien og virkeligheden, mit barn, hvad har de med hinanden at skaffe? Anna! Jeg har altid sagt det. Hvert af denne drengs to strålende øjne er et eventyr. Der bor en kunstner i hattemagerskens søn.

(Chap. 2)

Fontane's simple romanticising of nature in his painting of a sailing ship (Chap. 2) and also Råvad's wildly coloured abstracts are both contrasted with reality⁴⁴. It is apparent, then, that the coherence Rasmussen finds and relies on is in part a product of an imaginative interpretation of his past. He has created a literary work in order to find peace in himself and a mode of existence in the world⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ The satire of Råvad's insincerity and of his public's gullibility touches much contemporary art in general, but functions also as self-irony on the part of Kristensen. Råvad's encouragement to Rasmussen:

Du laver bare noget. Ikke noget rigtigt, men noget du har drømt. Noget helt uforståeligt. Hvad har du ellers ind i din sløve bold? Driver der ikke farver rundt derinde i din hjernes modbydelige mørke, når du lukker øjnene, hva'? Smæk dem på lærredet for satan!

(Chap 14.)

might be compared with the programmatic poem "Chrysantemum" (*Fribytterdrømme*) and especially with the following extract:

Ja, jeg kaster hen i Klatter
Det, som andre pensler ud.
Klatten andagtsfuld jeg skatter.
Dette er det første Bud.

⁴⁵ Freud's five lectures, part of Gelsted's translation in 1920, contain the assertion that the arts function as a means of coming to terms with reality by translating the products of the imagination into works of art. We shall see that the author implies that this is the way the autobiography

The question remains how this "literary solution" is treated in the novel as a whole, and how far we can deduce an attitude towards Rasmussen and his solution on the part of the author. The author puts Rasmussen in a certain environment, in which the contrasting values of East and West are particularly important, and we can interpret the interplay of character and environment which the author describes. The Westerner living in the East remarks above all how the two worlds differ, and it is Rasmussen's reaction to the difference which is significant. There is no abstract account of philosophical bases for the differences and the author relies on his reader's familiarity with general ideas about the Orient; we saw that there was considerable contemporary interest. He takes up the differences of experience which are relatable to Rasmussen's fundamental attitudes. Rasmussen admires oriental passive acceptance of life. He cannot, however, comprehend the equally passive acceptance of death and the possibility of dying at any arbitrary moment. There is the example of the dead Chinese in the street, and at the beginning of the novel he thinks of the way the Chinese do not care about the proximity of death when they narrowly escaped from traffic accident. He cannot accept the fundamental consistency of these attitudes to life and death. Nor can he accept oriental suppression of the significance of the individual, described by "the Dane":

"Man bliver kineser af at være herude," sagde han. "Man mister alle de såkaldte 'sjælelige' værdier, som var ved at sprænge een derhjemme i Europa. Originalitet, hvad er det? Det er kun hvid mands ambition, og derfor sprænger han alt i luften, hans forfædre har bygget op. Hvad fanden skal vi med alle de små indbildske jeg'er?"
(Chap 2)

This contrasts obviously with Rasmussen's eventual ego-centred solution.

On two occasions when Rasmussen is forced to see himself and his world through oriental eyes, it is the implicit contrast of oriental truth and reality with Western and religious illusions which is a criticism of him. The Ming tomb embodies the disillusion and reality:

Ude ved Minggraven slog hele dens fremmede, gule verdens trøstesløshed ham i møde. De røde høje, den lange allé af stendyr, kameler, tigre, elefanter, de myldrende flokke af tiggere var ham uforståelige. Det

functions for Rasmussen, as we have already argued that *Livets Arabesk* has an analogous function for Kristensen himself.

var sandt, hvad der engang var blevet sagt ham: at komme til Kina er desillusionerende og stort som døden.
(Chap. 8)

Then in the Chinese temple, he senses the vanity of man's attempts to "master reality" through religion and art. He feels he has penetrated into the secrets of the human brain:

Men havde han ikke før gået ind i menneskehjerner? Var de syner af kristne symboler, theosofiske fantasier, dadaistiske billeder, indiske tempeludsmykninger, gothiske skulpturer og hans egne ungdommelige malerier, alt det, som han havde set danse forbi sig, ikke forskellige menneskers indre, der havde taget form og havde forsøgt at overvælde virkeligheden? Men hvor mærkeligt, at menneskene, som havde skabt disse mareridt, bagefter havde tilbedt det som gudommelige! Valdemar følte sig med eet, som om han ingen fødder havde, så svimmel var han.

(Chap. 10)

This passage is an implicit condemnation of the vanity of Rasmussen's own artistic solution, his autobiography. In the autobiography is a self-deceiving means of escaping from the sense of dizziness which the temple creates in him. In this oriental, disillusioned reality, three responses are portrayed: "the Dane's" complete and consistent integration into Chinese life; Scott's balancing act on the edge of Oriental reality, which he savours and profits from as Richard Dam profits from the amorality of meaninglessness; thirdly, Samuelsen's theosophy is a parody of superficial mixtures of Eastern and Western philosophies and of all religious systems.

Thus Rasmussen with his artist's exclusive involvement in himself and his work is surrounded by the complex of differences between East and West. On the other hand, the Chinese idea of the beauty of arbitrary and incoherent complexity in life - symbolised by the stone at the Summer Palace: "Smuk! Smuk sten! Vi kinesere elsker smukke sten!". For a moment Rasmussen sees and accepts that his own life is like that. On the other hand, there is the European insistence on establishing a meaningful thread in life. This is what Rasmussen finally settles for, even though it is the false coherence of artistic imagination and even though the stone had brought him nearer to the realisation of the falseness involved. It seems therefore that, placing Rasmussen in contrast to his oriental environment, the author implicitly criticises him and his art. Oriental reality is more consistently and deeply valid than Rasmussen's belief in the imaginative account of his life. Sitting in the train in the last chapter, he sees through the window the fragmentary nature of life, his lack of contact with Chinese life: "Livet var som rindende

vand". As an alternative, he turns to his own life "sådan som han havde givet det form på disse lapper papir", and thus satisfying himself with the substitution of the imaginative for the real, he finds the consolation which makes him smile. The substitution is in oriental eyes self-deception: the reliance on self is, as "the Dane" said, only self conceit.

As a final piece of evidence of the author's superior awareness and criticism of Rasmussen, let us look at the continued recurrence and symbolic meaning of the window in the novel. Whenever Rasmussen is described or describes himself sitting behind a window, it seems to offer him security and protection from the world. Even when his imagination draws him outside, he feels safe:

Om aftenen sad jeg altid ved vinduet og stirrede på hjørne-ejendommen overfor. Under fjerdesalsvinduerne var der en skrå gesims, som fik det til at svimle for mig. Selv om jeg søgte at holde min fantasi tilbage, tvang den sig frem. Jeg sad nok i sikkerhed bag ruden; men jeg gik også derovre; jeg var nødt til det
(Chap. 8)

One window, which he remembers as he sits in the train, had protected him from the world by making it seem unreal. The window of his favourite café in Copenhagen, with its stone surround, had acted as a mirror and turned reality into the incoherent, flickering, fragmentary flow of events, unconnected with past or future. The same images reappear in the last chapter. The point is that reality, incoherent and flickering, becomes for him, behind the window, unreal and of no consequence to the self:

Der var kun en bevægelse, frem og tilbage, og det glidende spejlbillede i de glaserede sten var så uvirkeligt, at jeg ikke søgte efter nogen mening eller nogen bane, mit eget lille jeg kunne gå.
(Chap. 14)

In the train too, life beyond the window, and the factual reality of his own experience in the past, are unimportant because they are not real and not relevant to the self⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ It is noteworthy too that in *Livets Arabesk*, the image of the railway-carriage window signifies a lack of concern with the events of reality, a lack of contact between self and world:

Livet filmed forbi ham (Baumann) som et landskab uden for et kupévindue, det vedkom ham ikke (...) Manglen på konsekvens i tilværelsen var der. Han konstaterede den. (...) Men den pinte ham ikke mere.
(*Livets Arabesk* II, 11)

Here too the link is made with the flickering image of the film to describe the nature of life's incoherence. Furthermore, the description of Rasmussen's gazing at "noget jern i dekorative snørkler", as he sits in the

Functions of the text

The novel's significance for its "ironic " author.

We have come across two important problems in this discussion of *En Anden*. First, we have tried to examine the typicality of Rasmussen's view of the world and the way this is communicated in detail, and we were forced to realise that Rasmussen is not a convincing representative figure. Second, as a kind of extension of our critical attitude towards Rasmussen, we have tried to grasp and coordinate signs of the author's attitude towards Rasmussen as a person and as a writer. It is difficult to establish definitely an explicit authorial attitude and this is in itself an indication that Kristensen felt uneasy about his main character without being able to articulate an explicit condemnation. In comparison, the epilogue of *Livets Arabesk* is much more definitive, but we can sense the same kind of self-criticism in the attitude to Rasmussen - who undoubtedly carries much of Kristensen's own experience on his shoulders⁴⁷ - as we found in the ironic authorial attitude of *Livets Arabesk*. Moreover, the last chapter of *En Anden*, though not so definite as to be called an epilogue, betrays in its different form and its change of narrative tone something of the authorial retreat from his characters which applied to Pram in *Livets Arabesk* and will be seen again in *Hærværk*. It is a trait common to all three novels that Kristensen takes advantage, as it were, of his characters to heap on them his own ills, attitudes and experiences in order finally to send them off or leave them hanging. He steps back and invites us to recognise their folly and particularly their weakness. Tom Kristensen has himself spoken of his tendency for self-mockery; for example, there are the well-known lines from "Min Pibe":

Jeg er kun en lille Digter

Halvt en Tænker, halvt en Nar.

This ability for light-hearted self-parody becomes more seriously his sceptic self observation and criticism. It is a trait one admires and which is probably responsible for Kristensen's back and forth movement between extremes of political, philosophical and religious spectra: between Scylla and Charybdis. On the other hand it is a trait which tends to weaken the novels because it weakens the characters without providing an articulate alternative critical

train, though without a basis for explanation in *En Anden* itself, might aptly refer to the rococo-image in *Livets Arabesk*, which signifies the vain spinning of thought, pure mental creation, as a means of filling the emptiness of space; this is in the final analysis what Rasmussen is doing.

⁴⁷ "når jeg ikke tænker så meget over (min barndom) mere, så er det, fordi jeg i *En Anden* har beskæftiget mig med alt det væsentlige stof i den." (*Tom på Thurø* 1971 p. 58)

viewpoint. The reader does not feel satisfied by the novel he is reading even though he can admire the ironic finesse of the author.

Thus, in the case of *En Anden*, despite the critical authorial attitude towards "subjectivism", which we have tried to grasp and document, the only formulated standpoint is a "subjective" one. The world is presented through and depends entirely on the individual's perception and experience. Because the author's position remains so vague, the novel's subjectivism stands out most obviously, particularly in the light of the categories thrown up in the contemporary debate we described earlier. In the same light, the novel had to be associated with individualist and reactionary politics.

We said above that Rasmussen carries much of Kristensen's own experience on his shoulders, and implied by that that the novel functions as the author's means of stating and examining his self through Rasmussen's autobiography. His account of the impact of Freud's writings upon him, that he realised how dangerously influential suppressed and forgotten experience can be, suggests that one of the functions of *En Anden* was to bring such experience to the surface, in self-analysis. It would then be rendered harmless⁴⁸. Rasmussen also serves another purpose for the author. He works through the possibility and implications of an entirely subjective view of the world. It seems to be the only moderately valid response to the common human condition of existence within the meaninglessness. It is such a European response which Kristensen's familiarity with oriental life invalidates. It is perhaps because Kristensen could not fully comprehend oriental passivity that he allows Rasmussen to survive despite the Orient, that his criticism never goes beyond the uneasiness we have noted. His wonder and incomprehension is present throughout the collection *Paafugleferien* and is stated in the first poem:

Og jeg blev forledt til at ane en Sjæl

⁴⁸ See note 37 above. It is also worth noting what Kristensen wrote about a book of criticism which tried to simplify and categorise the most recent tendencies in Danish literature, including his own work:

Rejserne til Østen skulde ligeledes for den moderne Digtning betyder Flugt fra Virkeligheden; men atter kan Gloserne stilles paa Hovedet. Hvis vi hævder, at Rejserne betød en Trang til at opsøge en stærkere, en tydeligere Virkelighed, vil ingen kunne benægte det. Og endelig skulde Barndoms-skildringerne være Flugt. Ja, det er de, hvis de ikke er Forsøg paa at trække Grundlignerne op i den sammensatte Virkelighed, som dagligt omgiver os.

(on: Kjeld Efeldt: *Den lykkelige Flugt Politiken* 9 December 1925)

i alle de Blikke, jeg mødte og saa,
og jeg blev forledt til at synge om det,
jeg ej kan forstaa.

On the other hand in an interview from his "Marxist-period" in the early thirties, Kristensen asserted that his work had gone through a process of self-criticism from novel to novel, and he thus ignored the ever-present element of irony within each novel. He picked out the subjective function of *En Anden*, what we might call its "European function":

Livets Arabesk, det var Fantasi som Virkelighed. I *En Anden* søgte jeg en ny Basis, et bedre Grundlag, jeg troede, je kunde slaa Rod i Barndomserindringer, jeg vilde ud i en Individualisme saa grænseløs som mulig (...)
("Marxisme - ! En Samtale med Tom Kristensen"
Ekstrabladet 4 April 1931)

The novel's "political" significance

We described the contextual debate outside *En Anden* with the purpose of attributing philosophical and political significance to the novel. We admitted the possibility that by reading it as a contribution to the debate we may well be going beyond authorial intentions and awareness. The fact that the debate was only in its early stages and that, in contrast to *Hærværk*, it does not occur explicitly in the text of *En Anden* reinforces the possibility. By reading *En Anden* "politically", as individualistic and reactionary, we are also limiting ourselves to the viewpoint of only one section of the public and can cover the novel's function only for this section. The justification for this, however, is that it is the viewpoint of precisely those people, represented by Otto Gelsted, with whom Kristensen had associated and identified in writing *Livets Arabesk*. The divergence of opinion about literature's function is evident from a comparison of Gelsted's criticism of *Livets Arabesk* in 1923 and Kristensen's criticism in *Tilskueren* in 1924. It is evident that Gelsted has by this time become more demanding and is no longer content with Iversen's belief in "Eksemplets Polemik" and art's opening of "new possibilities of life". He had never been entirely satisfied with the view anyway, for in *Ekspressionisme*, 1919, he had attacked Dada extremist meaninglessness. This attack is repeated in his critique of *Livets Arabesk* but it is important to note is the extension, that art should be concerned with specifically contemporary problems:

Tom Kristensen synes at sige (in *Livets Arabesk*): "Jeg betragter Tilværelsens Kaos, og vent ikke, at jeg skal hitte Rede deri. Jeg nøjes med at forme et Billede, og

nogen moralsk eller social Værdsættelse skal I ikke søge hos mig – jeg er moralsk Dadaist.”

Der er Grund til at vente sig adskilligt af Tom Kristensens artistiske og eksperimenterende Evner. Men jeg ser ikke, hvordan Literaturen kan slippe for at tage vurderende Stilling til de Kræfter, der er oppe i Tiden. Emil Bønnelyckes Glæde ved Livet, blot fordi det er Liv, og Tom Kristensens Glæde ved Formen, blot fordi den er Form, forekommer mig lige ensidige Standpunkter.

(“Lyrikens Blomstring” *Politiken* 3 February 1923)

Kristensen himself, on the other hand, explicitly refuses art's intervention in politics, for what is of value to the reader is the pleasure of a well-turned description and the meeting of an artistic personality. It is clear from the following passage that the notion of tendentiousness was already in the air in these early years of the 1920s; it became the centre of debate later:

Jacob Paludan berørte i enkelte af sine Digte politiske Emner og fulgte der en farlig Tendens, som ligger i alleryngste Lyrik. Digtningen skal være aktiv, som det hedder paa Dansk i Aaret 1923.

(“Efteraarets Lyrik” *Tilskueren* 1924 1 p.53)

We may assume that Kristensen wanted to offer his public a non-political encounter with himself and his world, but that is former allies saw in it only a politically reactionary, individualist self-absorption.

There is one final point to be made about *En Anden*, which in a sense anticipates and points forward to *Hærværk*. For it is a point of criticism which seems to go beyond the author's awareness in *En Anden* but which he "answers" in *Hærværk*.

Rasmussen and Jastrau

It has been a central tenet of our interpretation that Rasmussen substitutes "art" for "reality" in order to reach some satisfactory basis for living. In addition we have suggested that the writer was uneasily aware of the escapist, unsatisfactory nature of this solution. We shall argue here that there are other factors contributing to the "success" of Rasmussen's solution which the writer does not show any awareness of but which also provoke a feeling of dissatisfaction.

Rasmussen convinces himself that there is deep within him an unchanging entity which he calls his self. He finds his strength within himself, in order to counterbalance his own weakness. His weakness consists of his tendency to identify wholly with the

experience and opinions of another person. As a child, it was with Sejr; in China, it is alternately with "the Dane" and Scott. He becomes aware of this weakness and therefore tries to cast it off by postulating some untouchable deep self. It also becomes apparent that this self is not touched by conditions in the material world, for in the final chapter he says:

Hvad hjalp de fremmede ting ham? Hvad hjalp de gamle ting ham? Charbin eller København? Det var altsammen ydre ting, som funkede, lyste og larmede; men bag dem lå det evigt tomme rum.

What is unsatisfactory here is that he ignores the factual existence of his relationship to other people and their influence on his views over the world. He ignores, for example, the importance of his loss of contact with his mother, or a conclusive influence of Richard Dam which sent him on his first journey to sea. He also fails completely to account for the material poverty in which he had lived as a child, and, in China, he does not consider the importance of his economic and physical condition, when for the first time he has a regular and secure life. The postulation of a deeper "truer" self, springing from disgust with one's ability to establish oneself independently within effective relationships to other people, leads to falsification and denial of experience. The dichotomy of inner self and external world produces the denial automatically, in *En Anden* and, less noticeably, in *Livets Arabesk*. Jastrau, in *Hærværk*, resembles Rasmussen in that he plunges into himself, into his soul, but a significant development takes place towards the end of *Hærværk*. The author brings Jastrau back to genuine contact with the outer world and implicitly refuses the world of the soul. In *En Anden*, however, that stage of recognition is not attained and Rasmussen is allowed to maintain his confidence in his self, and thereby deceive himself.

GENNEM DETENTIONSLOKALE EN TIME MED TOM KRISTENSEN

HAN er sin Generations største Talent. Og han er et Menneske. Han er det ærligste Menneske, jeg kender. Ærlig, naturligvis, i stor Forstand — ikke som Købmanden paa Hjørnet, der giver rigtig Vægt eller som Kontorchefen, der er stolt af, at han betaler sine Regninger og indskrænker sig til at kyse sin Kone. Han er ærlig med sig selv, ingen Svinkeærinder, ingen falsk Blufærdighed. Naar han engang skriver sine Erindringer, vil de, tror jeg, kunne sidestilles med André Gide's.

Af Ydre er han stor og kraftig og samtidig drenget. Han er ofte sin hjertelige Latter, der — det har Fredrik Nygaard engang rigtig sagt — lyder, som kom den fra en Mand uden i ham, og ikke fra ham selv. De lange smalle Hænder med de slanke Fingre staar besynderligt til hans robuste Krop.

— Jeg er ogsaa af blandet Aftamning, siger Tom Kristensen, jeg er halvt fra Himmerland og halvt fra Kjøbenhavn, og i øvrigt født i London . . . Jeppe —

— Flodhesten?
— Nej, Aakjær . . . han sagde for Fæsten engang, at jeg var noget internationalt Skidt, ligesom Peter Nansen! . . .

Insurat

Han er 70 — men ikke gammel,

thi han har opdaget Hemmeligheden og bevarer sig ungdommelige Spændstighed ved i Tide at gennemgaa en Radium-Kur, der er Naturens bedste Middel til at holde Organismen i Orden, selv højt op i Aarene. De skulde gøre ligesaa og forsøge en Kur med M i r a d i u m-Salt, som har gjort Tusinder og atter Tusinder glade og tilfredse.

M i r a d i u m-Salt anbefales af Læger og faas paa alle Apoteker til en Pris af Kr. 3,00 og 6,00 pr. Glas til ca. 1 Maanedes Kur.



Desuden har jeg haft det Uheld at forene flere Samfundsklasser i mig . . . fra min Barndom har jeg Indtryk af Proletariatet, jeg har en Saarig Universitetsuddannelse, og nu tilhører jeg vel Middelstanden . . .

Jeg kunde ikke gaa med Handsker.

— Føler De Dem ikke som Kjøbenhavn? — Jo, absolut . . . jeg hater hjerne-

ikke forstaa, at mine Digte ikke lignede noget andet, og det kunde de andre heller ikke . . . jeg lod være med at udgive dem . . . de var kun beregnet til at læse op, naar vi var fulde . . . havde jeg den Gang haft mere Mod, tror jeg godt, at jeg kunde have skabt noget som . . . ja, jeg tør sgu godt sige som Arthur Rimbaud . . . jeg kunde vist godt have foretaget hele Udviklingen, der kom i Aarene bagefter . . . Men



Tegning af Otto G.

Tom Kristensen.

blandt de Folk af den kjøbenhavnske Intelligens, der søger Tilflytning til Haandens Arbejdsloste, jeg er der saa vidt optaget af de marxistiske Teorier . . . uden dog at være fuld Teoretiker . . .

— Hvorfor blev De Forfatter?

— Jeg plejer at sige som Stern P . . . at jeg skulde ha' været P . . . men jeg kunde ikke gaa med Handsker . . . jeg skulde sgu ha' været Adfærd, men jeg kunde altsaa ikke te mig . . . da jeg efter de otte Aar tog Husbødsksamen og skulde tjene Pengene, maatte jeg saa at sige begynde forfra som Lærer i Holsten . . . i øvrigt har jeg skrevet altid . . . fra jeg var otte Aar gammel var jeg klar over, at jeg vilde skrive . . . saa trods alle Smølinger har jeg fulgt en lige Linie . . .

— Hvad skræmte De i Deres første Studenteraar?

— Sammen med Hartvig Frisch, Frithof Brandt og Nerregaard havde jeg en Klub, som hed "Taaren" . . . og for den skrev jeg en Del Digte . . . blandt andet Landsknægtevise, som er fra 1913, og Arthur med de blanke Laksko, og Rio Janeiro . . . men jeg kunde

hvis det lyder storsnudet, saa lad være med at skrive det . . .

Mit Maal som Forfatter og Kritiker.

— De har indviklet Dem fra Æstetik til Etik?

— Ja, det maaske jeg jo sige ja til . . . fordi jeg maaske indremme, at *l'art pour l'art* sunder et Faldt, til Personligheds Opløsning . . . det gør den . . . men de enkelte Problemer inden for Moral og Kunst . . . for jeg ikke sige, at jeg har læst.

— Har De et Formaal med Deres Forfatterskab?

— Ja . . . det, at gøre Kunsten til en direkte Del af mit Liv — saa maaske Ting vel kunne vise en Mand *Vejen til Livet* . . . det er ikke l'art pour l'art . . . men Opfattelse af Kunsten som Funktion.

— Og med Deres Kritik?

— Min Kritik . . . har to Funktioner — en direkte underminerende, politisk Funktion . . . men samtidig prøver jeg paa at redde saa mange af de intellektuelle og kunstneriske Værdier som muligt . . . jeg kan selvfølgelig godt

anerkende en konservativ Forfatter har Talent . . . jeg er ikke kantet i Ho'det, selv om jeg politisk Parti . . . det hænge med hele min Indstilling som at ville redde Værdierne over anden Side af den Revolution altsaa tror kommer . . . jeg under hvilken Form.

Den proletariske Bevægelse i Kunst og Literatur

— Kan man i Almindelighed gøre et Maal for Literaturen?

— Nej . . . det kan man sgu

— Heller ikke for Kritikerne!

— Kritik er jo lige saa

et Arbejde som anden Kunst

— en Kritiker maaske jo alligevel

bevæget end en Kunstner —

— Skal Kunsten ikke være

— Jo . . . men det underbe-

ler mere ind, naar en Kunstner

und naar en Kritiker skaber . . .

er jo kun en Nuanceforskel.

— Hvordan stiller De Dem

proletariske Bevægelse i Liter-

— Jeg regner med, at jeg

midt i den . . . men jeg synes

uanset mine Kolleger som oftest er

den danske Fællesret . . .

— Ser De optimistisk paa

rens Fremtid?

— Ja, det gør jeg selvfølgelig

ste Grad . . . fordi det venter

nyt Stof . . . nye Problemstillinger

Former for Oplevelser . . . Op-

Morsen og Erotik er jo helt

at blive en helt anden . . .

er der jo det, at der ligesom

hælder to attende *Vasker* paa

sen — *Karl Marx* og *Freud* . . .

kommer noget helt nyt, naar

optaget med dem . . . det er en

at arbejde med.

— Hvilket Land mener I

fremmest i Ojeblikket?

— Det gør selvfølgelig An-

Rusland . . . derfor kommer Form-

— Ikke fra Tyskland?

— Jo, maaske paa Musker-

de . . . og jo, for Resten, *M-*

stein, *Freud* — altsaa jo.

Den lokale Literatur

— Hvordan ser De paa v-

nye Literatur?

— Der er ved at blive kla-

heldigvis, man deler sig i to i

Seedorf og *Bonnelycke* er jo abs-

til Hæge (Bonne til "Venstre",

Paludan staar der jo ogsaa, og

er vist ogsaa en konservativ N-

— Er ingen af den Generat-

i den rigtige Retning?

— Jo, jo . . . men blandt

er der ingen, der staar paa E-

en Tegner som *Anton Hansen*

Arkitekt som *P. H.* . . . det ty-

den praktiske Optagethed af

sen er et væsentligt Element i

(Fortælling nedret paa

Hærværk

Introduction

Jeg kan ikke lide det Ord. Tendens? Nej, jeg synes meget bedre om Poul Henningsens Retning. Man kan vel udforme sit Stof anskueligt uden at prædike, mon ikke?
("Marxisme --! En Samtale med Tom Kristensen"
Ekstrabladet 4 April 1931)

Ja, for Øjeblikket ligger altsaa en stor Bog færdig – som jeg haaber er en "modig bog" – der skildrer den aandelige Opløsningstilstand, som jeg mener er karakteristisk for 1920'ernes borgerlige og æstetiske København.
("Da Tom løb Linen ud" *Social-Demokraten* 30 November 1930)

Den er *ingen* Tendens-Roman, den er en Roman med Retning, og Retningen er Kamp mod Alkohol (...) Al Tendens gør Kunsten flad, medens Skikkelserne i en Bog med Retning baade kan faa Lov at leve for Retningens – Tendensens – Skyld og for deres egen Skyld, det er *det*, der er tilbage af mig, af Artisten (...)
("Sold gi'r Syn" *Berlingske Tidende* 29 November 1930)

Tom Kristensen seen through his literary criticism

As the 1920s passed, there occurred a polarisation of views within the generation of intellectuals to which Tom Kristensen belonged. The process became increasingly public, as critics like Henning Kehler stated openly their position as conservatives, while the left-wing movement became more active in the publication of periodicals such as *Clarté*, *Monde* and *Kritisk Revy*. Tom Kristensen watched the developments for some time from the wings as a self-declared sceptic, but by 1929 he had become a convinced adherent of the left-wing. As a public personality and respected literary critic his scepticism and subsequent change of position were noticed and commented upon. He was also noticed in another context, for he sympathised with the alcohol prohibition movement which was very strong at this period. He sympathised but was not entirely converted and marked his distance from the absolute demands of the movement by forming a small separate club, with two friends.

When *Hærværk* was published the critics unfortunately saw more connection with the prohibition context than with the political. It is the latter which is more significant and in order better to understand the significance we shall examine the change Kristensen underwent in the late 1920s, as far as it is apparent in his criticism. Although others of the "war-generation" had gone through the change earlier, and although for some of them it was not so radical, Kristensen is in this respect a representative figure. We shall see when we turn to *Hærværk* itself that something more than a change of rationalised opinion takes place, but the change is also very evident in its effects on Jastrau's attitude to certain contemporary intellectual issues, including the function of literature. It is therefore useful to see how Kristensen's own criticism foreshadowed *Hærværk*. Then we shall describe other opinions and it will be clear where Kristensen eventually stood by the early 1930s, and later how far *Hærværk* is symptomatic of his position.

We quoted in Chapter III a passage from 1924 in which Kristensen refuses the idea that writing should be political. His criticism in the following years maintained this line. He was sceptical towards all values and systems. In his speech to Studentersamfundet in 1926, he called on the young students to exercise their doubt and scepticism on the facile opinion-makers who were particularly rampant in the so-called "Livsanskuelsesdebat":

Den veltalende Mand er en farlig Mand, han har for stor
Magt og derfor udsat for større Fristelser end andre.
Derfor maa han opdrages med Skepsis, han skal møde
Tvivl hos sine Tilhængere
("Rusgildet i Studentersamfundet" *Politiken* 3 October
1926)

In an article in 1928 he calls himself a sceptic, accepting what others have said of him, ("Efteraarets Literatur" *Tilskueren* December 1928 p. 383). In a well-known article on "Den unge Lyrik og dens Krise" (*Tilskueren* July 1925 p. 31) he states his disillusion with communism and elsewhere he calls it "det ummenneskeligt menneskelige, som enhver Individualist maa føle Kommunismen er" ("To russiske Romaner" *Tilskueren* September 1928)⁴⁹. In 1928, he attacked the "religious fog" which was spreading over Denmark ("Efteraarets Literatur" *Tilskueren* November 1928 p. 317). In *Hærværk*, Jastrau will wander between the two poles of communism and religion.

⁴⁹ In this article he describes his own usual critical position as "disinterestedness". The occurrence of the same word in Kryger's accusing Jastrau of being a disinterested and therefore ultimately conservative and bourgeois, might be interpreted as a reference to and denunciation of Kristensen's own former position.

During 1928, Kristensen begins to admit that tendentious literature can refresh the literary climate, although he does not abandon his critical attitude. One article is noteworthy because it begins with words similar to Jastrau's and Steffensen's at the beginning of their friendship: "En Lyriker skal ikke have Meninger. Hvad skal han med Meninger?" ("Aktiv Lyrik" *Tilskueren* June 1928 p.410, cf. *Hærværk* I, 4). He is obliged however by the proliferation of books contributing to the "Livsanskuelsesdebat" to give an opinion. He calls the whole thing boring, maintaining that art is essentially independent. Nevertheless he again allows that tendentiousness is a refreshing counterbalance to the contemporary stagnation, which he describes with the term "l'art pour l'art". After discussing Johannes Jørgensen's *Den hellige Katerina af Siena* and Anker Larsen's *Sagnet som vokser ind i Himlen* which do not impress him, he admires Maurice Mæterlink's *Termitternes Liv (La Vie des Termites)*. Here we find the same arguments as appear in Jastrau's first meeting with Garhammer, almost literally repeated, and Kristensen admires the courage required to bring them to a consistent conclusion:

Videnskabeligt set er det taabeligt at tro, at Udviklingen glider hen mod Fuldkommenhed, for Verdnerne har været til lige fra en Begyndelse, der aldrig har været til, og den fuldkomne Tilstand maatte da være naaet et eller andet Sted og det vilde være utænkeligt, at Virkningerne af denne Fuldkommenhed da ikke skulde være naaet os, ellers var det ingen Fulkommenhed. Der er derfor kun eet – og det lærer Termitternes Skæbne os – og det er at nære den største Mistillid til Universets Hensigt med os.

("Bøger om Livsanskuelse" *Tilskueren* July 1928 p. 59)

Kristensen's preference for Mæterlinck foreshadows Jastrau's disgust with Steffensen's "escape" into Catholicism.

By 1929, Kristensen responds to Andersen Nexø's bitter attack on "l'art pour l'art" in *Midt i en Jærntid* by acknowledging the need for political engagement, while warning against the extremes of contemporary German politicised literature. It is necessary to find "det rette Ligevægstpunkt og fortolke Sætningen l'art pour l'art i den Retning at den kommer til at betyde "anvendt Kunst" eller "Tendens indarbejdet i det anskuelige"" ("Kunst og Politik" *Tilskueren* November 1929 p.358). By this time too he is publicly encouraging the so-called proletarian writers, while still requiring artistic quality and deploring simplistic admiration for a work because of its writer's origins ("Et lige saa aabent Svar" *Tilskueren* August 1929 p.142). The following is a characteristic answer to the question how he views the proletarian movement in literature:

"Jeg regner med, at jeg selv staar midt i den (...) men jeg synes, at mine kære Kolleger som oftest er nogle ortodokser Fæhoveder(...)"
("Gennem Detentionslokalet" *Politiken* 17 November 1929)

On the other hand, he is more definite in his condemnation of Thomas Dinesen's *No Man's Land*. His criticism of its pre-war nihilistic amorality for being a radical form of conservatism is by implication the criticism of his own earlier sceptical nihilism. Implicitly referring to his own description of a bull fight in the poem "Mit Hjerte" in *En Kavalier i Spanien*, he dismisses aesthetic adventurism which follows the demands of the heart and prefers the restraint of reason:

Man kan være Æstetiker eller Æventyrer, hvilket er det samme, man kan være særlig og sige, at man elsker noget saa modbydeligt som Tyrefægtninger eller noget saa ideelt som Krigen, der kommer altid det Øjeblik, hvor man maa være konsekvent og enten følge sin Fornuft (det skrøbelige Instrument) og prøve paa at tøjle det Hjerte. Det er jo trods alt blindt. Det sidder ind i Kroppen⁵⁰.
("Kunst og Politik" *Tilskueren* November 1929 p.358)

"L'art pour l'art" and "Tendens"

"Borgerlig! Jeg? Jeg vil ikke mere tale med Dem. Men et kunstværk kan da godt være kunst, jeg mener – sludder – et værk kan da godt være kunst, fordi det er konservativt, eller fordi det er kommunistisk."
"Ja, faglig set; men det er ikke et standpunkt."
"Hvad rager standpunkt mig?"
(*Hærværk* I, 5)

⁵⁰ Tyrefægtningen blev et billed, hvori der sprang elegante situationer frem og vakte vild jubel og undertiden også en spraglet rædsel, som jeg først kastede et sideblik hen til og senere stirrede uforfærdet i møde. Jeg indstillede mig direkte på forfærdelsen, jeg konfronterede.
("Tyrefægtningen" *En Kavalier i Spanien* 1926)

Gud nåde mit arme og fattige hjerte,
Der skriger af glæde ved blod.
Det øger en underlig lykke i smerte
Og savner dog smerteligt mod.
("Mit Hjerte" *En Kavalier i Spanien* 1926)

What happens to opinions about literature and criticism during the 1920s is a polarisation of tendencies which were evident from the start. During this process people began to use labels to identify groups and beliefs. There was some confusion and indecision among the war generation and its immediate followers so that particularly the writers calling themselves the *Klinte* movement felt the need to define their views. In fact, they do no more than state aims and conditions to which any writer would concede: the writer's responsibility towards his work, and the work's contribution to the reader's pleasure and familiarity with human issues. They claim that they are not stating a program, but it is significant that, in a programmatic tone, they feel the need to state their position between the two poles of "l'art pour l'art" and "Tendens". The writer of "l'art pour l'art", they say, has an unacceptable morality, too far removed from ordinary people. The tendentious writer, whether "proletarian" or "upper class", is simply an opportunist:

vi staar dermed ved den moderne Opfattelse af Kunstneren, der ikke blot i formel Henseende adskiller sig fra de ovennævnte. Man siger ikke mere Kunstneren, men Mennesket, der er Kunstner.

(K. Bruun-Rasmussen: "Kunstnere og andre Mennesker" *Femte November* 1927 p.184)

In fact, this kind of formulation which tries to revise the idea of the artist being interested only in his art without giving in to pressure to politicise art, is a position gradually taken up by others outside the *Klinte* circle. These others are not a self-identifying group, but can be grouped together as a conservative opposition to the growing left-wing activity. This activity was not limited to literary criticism by any means, for the cultivation of tendentious literature was only one of the aims of *Kritisk Revy* around which many left-wing intellectuals gathered.

Hans Kirk was the most active advocate of politicising art and literature and sought in *Kritisk Revy* to rehabilitate and redefine the concept of "Tendens". This catchword inevitably required an opposite and "l'art pour l'art" was used and then given negative, conservative associations. For it is argued that all art intentionally or not is tendentious and the recommendation in *Kritisk Revy* is of course that in future, art should be "democratically" and "anti-bourgeois" tendentious. What is not "democratic" is rejected as "bourgeois". Both literature exclusively "artistic" and literature which centres on the individual and his human experience are rejected; for the second is said to be a continuation of the first. This is an offshoot of the politicisation of the subjectivity/objectivity debate discussed earlier.

In his article redefining "Tendens", ("Litteratur og Tendens" *Kritisk Revy* 1927 No.4), Kirk says that the usual conception of a tendentious literature is that it attacks existing social systems and that it is badly written. Revolutionary writing is presumed to be bad writing. This helps to explain why writers immediately after the war avoided open political engagement. It is also an indication of the general attitudes which Kristensen had to reckon with when writing *Hærværk* and throws light on his conscious elimination of what he called "the moral" from his novel, in order to "improve" it. Gelsted also points out that the usual conception of tendentiousness simply equates it with falsification ("Populærvidenskab" *Kritisk Revy* December 1926 p.46). The following passage from an early issue of *Kritisk Revy* is also anxious to avoid misunderstanding by differentiating between positive "Tendens" and negative "tendentiøs":

Al Kunst maa have en Tendens, fordi den maa have en Mening, men derfor bliver Kunsten ikke tendentiøs. Folk kan mene og tænke for os, hvad de vil, naar der bagved ligger en ideel Stræben.

("Kunsten, Moralen og Samfundet" *Kritisk Revy* December 1926 p.5)

For Kirk, however, all literature is tendentious and quality is a matter of the correct relationship between form and content, not a matter of content and intent. He says that much literature written for a large public is in fact "bourgeois" and not "proletarian". It supplies the demands of the proletariat who have been taught by society's institutions to envy the bourgeoisie and read weakened versions of their literature. With his *Fiskerne* 1928 he provided an illustration of what true proletarian tendentious literature might be⁵¹.

Not to give the wrong impression, we must note that the general tone of *Kritisk Revy* was not so extreme as Kirk's. Poul Henningsen particularly set a "humanist" rather than "socialist" tone, avoiding the exclusive emphasis on either society or the individual⁵². For

⁵¹ *Fiskerne* was highly praised by Kristensen, ("Dansk Prosa" *Tilskueren* March 1929 p.188), and in *Kunst Økonomi Politik* he describes it as the only Danish novel in recent years to deal with the reality critics were properly demanding. Kirk's argument that proletarian taste has been contaminated by bourgeois ideals is typical of much of the thinking behind *Kritisk Revy*. It may be the origin of Kristensen's attention to Jastrau's and Else's taste for "bourgeois" rococo and oriental furnishings.

⁵² The articles to be quoted here and others similar, - not necessarily linked to the left-wing as the quotation from *Femte November* illustrates - are the context to Jastrau's thinking of "modern humanism" as he sits in the waiting rooms, Garhammer's and the doctor's, and to his refusing to report to the police his suspicions that Steffensen has murdered Anna

example, in the foreword to the third issue, the keyword is underlined, and the insistence on the subservience of society to its members in a later article is representative of the modified tone:

Det er Hensigten, at Kritisk Revy skal være Samlingsstedet for en moderne, *menneskelig* Kunst.
("Forord" *Kritisk Revy* December 1926)

I dette Spil mellem Individ og Samfund er der endnu intet, der peger hen paa Samfundet som Maalet. Alle Ofre bringes af Individet for Individets Skyld (...) For vore Medmenneskers og Børns Skyld bringer vi Ofre, ikke for Samfundets Skyld. Netop ved denne kollektive Individualisme hæver Mennesket sig op til menneskelig Højde.

("Verdensproblemet Menneskets Bolig" *Kritisk Revy* 1928 no. 2)

When Kirk warned against certain forms of literature, his assertion that all literature is tendentious led him to characterise "neutral" or "pure" art as conservative "in so far as it must have a social basis"; this is the argument Kryger uses against Jastrau. Similar arguments are found elsewhere. Barbusse, a respected figure in this period, makes a more forceful statement explaining why the artist who believes he must avoid the harmful effect of political issues on his art and limit himself to impartiality, is conservative. His statement appears in the Danish edition of *Clarté*:

Denne Teori om Kunsten for Kunstens Skyld ("l'art pour l'art") tjener i Virkeligheden til at skabe konservative, fordi den spærrer den intellektuelle ude fra praktisk Virksomhed.

("Forfatternes Kald" *Clarté* September 1926)

It is important to notice in contrast to this dogmatic tone that the supporters of tendentiousness did not blindly turn away from the aesthetic considerations associated with "l'art pour l'art". Kirk discusses the importance of literary quality, Gelsted accepts the special influence of the literary imagination on conceptions of reality:

der ligger i Læren om "Kunsten for Kunstens Skyld" gemt den rigtige Tanke, at Kunsten former Virkeligheden paa en særlig Maade.

("Kapital og Kunst" *Clarté* Jan. 1926 p.24)

Unfortunately the requirements of polemic tend to hide or omit what is owed to "l'art pour l'art" and thus distort the impression. It happens for example in Hartvig Frisch's contribution to the debate,

Maria; his words play on the opposition of individual and society: "Det var samfundets opgave, og saa var det ikke hans opgave, for staten, det er ikke mig" (IV, 7).

which incidentally also illustrates how the same argumentation was applied to literary criticism:

Som Forholdene nu ligger, er næsten al dansk Kritik indstillet paa samme Maade som Richardt Gandrup her i Aften. Det er æstetisk Finsmageri, der i Ly af en Tendensløshed, man selv tror paa, faktisk har en stærk konservativ Tendens.

(*Litteratur og Kritik af i Dag* 1931 p.23)

Kirk had divided what he called conservative literature into a further category of "bourgeois" literature, meaning that which deals with a specific milieu and its problems. The only possible development here, he says, would be disguised psychological analysis. This distortion of "l'art pour l'art" from psychological literature often leads however to the two being confused and rejected together. Frisch again provides the illustration:

Men lige saa vist som vort eget indre Liv er Nøglen til at forstaa andre, lige saa let kan Studiet deraf munde ud i en gold Personlighedyrkelse, for hvilken andres Glæder og Lidder er latterlige eller blot ligegyldige. Det bliver Kunsten for Kunstens egen Skyld (...) Det, jeg da vilde kræve, er ikke, at Digteren skal være upersonlig, men netop at han i sin Personligheds Brændpunkt skal indfange Billedet af Tiden, af hele Samfundets Liv, af Massernes Kamp og af de altoverskyggende økonomiske Probleme.

(*Litteratur og Kritik af i Dag* 1931 p.55)

Frisch wants literature to be engaged with specific contemporary problems in an inter-individual dimension. These adversaries want literature to illustrate generally human, atemporal issues through an exemplary individual⁵³. The debate quoted from here is a good illustration of how left-wing demands for tendentious literature force adversaries into extreme formulations of their views. Behind the extremes there is concealed considerable agreement that "tendentiousness" or "opinion" - the word used by the left's adversaries - must be given form according to minimal conditions for good art. On the other hand, the fact that this agreement could arise was an indication of a widespread feeling that contemporary literature needed a boost from new areas of experience.

⁵³ The distinction and preference here are analogies and ultimately interdependent with the definitions of reality which will be discussed later, and with the categories of objectivism and subjectivism. Frisch's wanting to include economic problems in literature corresponds to the inclusion of the social, the material and economics as primary components of "reality" and "truth". Gandrup rejects this narrow interpretation limited to "local" reality, and insist that *all* experience is real and that life's central problem is not the liberation of the working classes, but the "eternal struggle, which man must wage with himself".

We have looked at Kirk's and others' statements so closely for two reasons. First, they help us to identify the direction and extent of Kristensen's change of opinion. Although he was wary of the word "Tendens" and avoided open tendentiousness in *Hærværk*, he agreed with the spirit behind Kirk's opinions and the work of *Kritisk Revy*. Gradually and with increasing conviction, he took up a similar standpoint in his criticism and took to reading and talking about Marxist literature. This all culminated in the final sentence of *Kunst Økonomi Politik* appealing to the new generation of writers: "Ungdommen maa altsaa blive politisk". He later called this pamphlet his vulgar-marxist crisis.

The second reason is that traces of the debate, almost literally lifted from the arguments related above, appear in the text of *Hærværk*. Jastrau's reaction is therefore not simply a reaction towards ideas but also towards a political orientation with which they are associated. This is why he is confused by Kryger, a conservative, using "communist" arguments against "disinterestedness" in criticism, or "l'art pour l'art" in writing:

Jastrau hadede at blive sat under debat. Han kunne slaa den lille, blanke, konservative fyr, som spillede kommunistiske argumenter ud imod ham.

(I, 5)

Jastrau's reaction is not simply to accept or reject the arguments, but to turn away from the world in which such forces work. He wants to maintain his freedom even though it has not yet been threatened, for he has not tried to go against the interests of the newspaper which employs him. He explained it later to Luise Kryger:

"Man kan mene, hvad man vil, æstetisk, etisk og jeg ved ikke hvad; men hvis man mener noget, der griber ind i det økonomiske, hører friheden op (...) Jeg har som sagt ingen meninger. Men hvis --- Ja, hvis nu en dag det skulle slaa ned i mig, at det og det er rigtigt, og det og det er forkert, og denne mening stod i strid med det økonomiske, saa - "

(IV, I)

Jastrau feels pierced by Kryger's accusations that he is "bourgeois", and must react because he does not want to betray his youth's socialist convictions. Yet he does not commit himself to socialism, but hovers between the poles of the debate.

As is to be expected, neither in *Hærværk* nor in *Kunst Økonomi Politik* are Kirk's and Frisch's objections to the psychological novel raised. The objection would be that *Hærværk* and Jastrau's whole mode of experience is individualist and bourgeois. We shall see later

that there would be some justification for the objection with respect both to the writer and the main character of *Hærværk*. The novel contrasts sharply with the flood of contemporary novels on "proletarian" life and with "collective" subjects which had been set in motion by Kirk's *Fiskerne*. When talking to Harald Bergstedt about *Hærværk* in 1930 - that is, during his "Marxist period" - Kristensen claims it is characteristic for a whole social group. Still wary of tendentiousness, he embraces the belief that the artist must be committed to his age⁵⁴:

Den gamle Teori om Kunsten for Kunstens Skyld er gaaet i Stykker for mig. Tendensromanen tror jeg nu heller ikke paa. I den bliver Figurerne flade og ikke runde. Men jeg tror, at Nutidens Kunstner skal opsøge sin Tids Brændpunkt og virke der. Min artistiske Individualisme har jeg ført igennem lige til dens Fallit.

He then goes on to envisage his future in a different social identification which recalls Jastrau's apparent new orientation at the end of *Hærværk*:

Jeg skulde gerne se at finde min Plads midt i Andegaarden. For der er Pokkers kedeligt at være mellem Svanerne i den herskabelige lille Parksø.

("Da Tom løb Linen ud" *Social-Demokraten*
30 November 1930)

This intention did not quite work out in the long run, and we shall suggest later that even in *Hærværk* there are indications as to why.

Political and intellectual issues

We have already mentioned that *Hærværk* makes direct reference to particular ideas and events in the 1920s. It is obviously a novel tied very closely both to the writer's personal experience and to public life in the period immediately preceding its publication. One result of this was the disproportionate attention paid by critics to the "roman à clef" aspect. Given this close connection, we might, in our desire to make explicit what the novel assumes, give a description or map of Copenhagen, go on to a social historical survey and end with accounts of the people who are thought to be models for the novel's characters. By doing so, we would account for the pleasure of recognition which a reader familiar with the city undoubtedly feels. We might also begin to see how "adequate"

⁵⁴ This statement compares in detail with Hartvig Frisch's views, and can be contrasted with Peter P. Rohde's strongly negative criticism of Joyce, whom he called "the writer without readers" (*Litteraturen og Bourgeoisiet* 1934 p. 30), and whom Kristensen has admitted was his literary forerunner. Rohde's socially orientated criticism of *Ulysses* is also applicable to *Hærværk*.

Kristensen's view of the setting is compared with other accounts and this would help us to evaluate and criticise him. On the other hand, we have no normative account of the setting which would serve as a criterion and, with respect to the task of interpreting the novel's meaning, the values and meanings attached to phenomena taken from the period are made explicit enough in the text. Nonetheless, as in the case of *Livets Arabesk* it will be useful to name some of these phenomena which the text uses namelessly in order to orientate the reader and to show just how close the book is attached to its period, whose detailed is beginning to be hidden by the passing of time.

It is a different question however which asks about the writer's attitude and relationship to what he sees and uses of the world around him. As in the case of *En Anden*, the epistemological basis which the novel can be shown to use has particular significance because the novel expresses thereby allegiance to certain groups and political ideas. It is in fact in continuation of the same intellectual debate with its political associations that we shall discuss differing conceptions of "reality" and of the "individual" and "society" or "state". For in the sharpened atmosphere of the late 1920s there was a tendency to throw catchwords around, and for example to proclaim "reality" only for those aspects of experience which suited one's political purposes. Moreover the political debate tended to centre around the relationship of the individual to society conceived as opposites which must be reconciled. These catchwords appear in *Hærværk* where they designate Jastrau's particular experiences and convictions and from their usage we can read the political implications of Jastrau's experience and, eventually, the implications of the writer's attitude towards Jastrau.

Hærværk's first part is dominated by the question of why Sanders and Steffensen need to go into hiding for some days in Jastrau's flat. They need to wait for the outcome of the elections, for they hope that the Social Democrats will win and then grant them amnesty. This is clearly an illusion to the election of Denmark's first "workers' government" in April 1924, which lasted until December 1926. In a sense the failure of the Easter Crisis had been avenged and the extremist agitators among intellectuals rewarded. The latter though limited in numbers had attracted much attention by selling newspaper which claimed to contain revelations about the scandal of the Landmandsbank crisis, and by engaging in open battle with right-wing student factions⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ The first edition of *Samfundet* (udgivet af Studentersamfundets Unge), May 1922, contains a list of those people who wanted to reform the Studentersamfund, including Tom Kristensen. From September 1923 to November 1924, a new paper *Pressen* was published by the same people,

Jastrau feels himself affected by the political aims of his younger friends, but he also comes under the influence of Kryger, a conservative. Kryger is an economist and the weight given to his interests and arguments in *Hærværk* reflects the importance of economic questions in the mid-1920s. The Social Democrats failed to deal with them, disappointed the hopes of the left wing and were replaced by a Liberal government. Eventually Kryger persuades Jastrau of the importance of economics, and brings him back to "reality"⁵⁶. By the time *Hærværk* was published, late in 1930, the "reality" of economic crisis was even more apparent as the effects of the Wall Street crash began to be felt in Denmark.

Turning now to details of cultural life we shall see that *Hærværk* makes direct allusions to several public issues. In 1927, Gelsted

now calling themselves "Det Ny Studentersamfund". Reports of these confrontations are given in *Politiken* 21 October and 3 November 1923, and also in corresponding issues of *Pressen*. Clearly, there is a similarity between these events and the exploits of Sanders in *Hærværk*. Many years later, Kristensen explained how closely these events were related to himself and his work:

"Det var et kommunistblad, "Pressen", der udkom, og de havde offentliggjort den her liste over de folk, der havde været låntagere i Landmandsbanken (...) Og kommunisterne skulle straffes og i fængsel osv, (...) Og da mødte en jeg kendte og en anden usympatisk person op hos mig og bad mig om (...) at huse dem et par dage, indtil valget havde fundet sted, så de slap for fængselsstraffen. Og det kunne jeg jo ikke sige nej til. Og det er et af grundmotiverne, der ligger bagved, og altså historisk rigtig.

(*Tom på Thurø* 1971 p.46)

Pressens own account is more detailed:

Det var i September 1922, at "Studentersamfundets Unge", nu "Det Ny Studentersamfund", udgav sit første Blad, Flyveskriftet "Samfundet", hvori det fastslog, at Landmandsbanken var fallit, holdtes kunstigt oppe af Pengemændene, og at Glückstadt havde gjort sig skyldig i Bedrageri. Faa troede paa os den Gang, navnlig fordi alle de øvrige Blade tav eller løj om Professor Birch's og vore Afsløringer.

(*Pressen* 12 July 1924)

⁵⁶ Financial problems also continued to press the professional writer. It is evident for example from the discussion which took place during and after the Scandinavian writers' congress in 1924 that professional writing alone could not provide a means of existence. The discussion, in part public, raised possible alternatives, which would make the writer dependent on other kinds of activity; Jastrau's sense of self-betrayal, of the poet in him by the critic he has been forced to become, draws on this context.

continued his attacks on subjectivism, which we described earlier in connection with *En Anden*:

Dogmatisme og religiøs Overtro er sikkert mindst lige saa skadelig for Erkendelsens Fremskridt som nogen Form af Skepticisme.

For en Modstander af begge Ekstremer er det paafaldende, hvor ofte de rører hinanden – ofte er Vejen kort fra Overtvivl til Overtro. Der ligger heri en Fare, som jeg ikke tror, Relativisterne altid selv er klare over. Lykkes det dem først at gøre al Vished flydende for et Menneske, kan det hænde, at han i svimmel Panik flygter over i Dogmet og Overtroen for dog at finde et fast Punkt, selv om Punktet er en Illusion.

("Gives der et objektivt Kriterium paa Kunst?" *Kritisk Revy* June 1927 p.34)

Gelsted's reference to dogmatism was applicable to Roman Catholicism as represented in particular by Helge Rode, for example in his *Det store Ja*. Tom Kristensen was the public advocate of scepticism. We chose this particular quotation because it "predicts" the course which Jastrau almost follows in *Hærværk*, flight towards Catholicism, which is only stopped by a porter and an iron railing (III, 7). Sceptical relativism was also condemned from a conservative point of view by Henning Kehler:

Det almindelige Indtryk er: "Alt flyder". Dette Ord af Oldtidensfilosoffen Heraklit er kommet til ny Ære og Værdighed hos Filosofer og Moralister, Politikere og Kunstnere (...)

("Ungdom og Tro" *Quod Felix* no. 8 1927)

The scepticism and nihilism which was fairly widespread at the beginning of the decade still has a hold on some people, and plays an important part in *Hærværk* itself. The challenges to traditional morality in the early years developed in the late 1920s into preoccupations with sexual morality. Books by the American Ben Lindsay, proposing official recognition for trial marriages ("Kammeratægteskab" or "companionate marriage"), were translated and read avidly by many people. One reaction to the debate which these and other works aroused came from the Minister of Justice, who introduced a whole series of reforms and censorship, saying:

"Det er almindeligt bekendt, at der overalt er en afgjort Nedgang i Moralen og Smagen under de opløst Forhold,

der er fulgt i Verdenskrigens Kølvand (...)"

(quoted in *Politiken* 12 June 1926)

Other people tried to be more positive, and campaigns providing information about venereal diseases and contraception were set in

motion⁵⁷. Another minority response was to turn attacks on traditional institutions to political advantage:

Alle ægteskabets skyggesider er nøje knyttet til det borgerlige samfunds struktur og dets kønsmoral er en direkte støtte for det borgerlige samfund og den kristne kirke. Alle de, der ønsker en ny samfundstilstand og en ny livsanskuelse – alle socialistisk tænkende mennesker – bør forstaa, at ogsaa kampen mod den borgerlige kønsmoral er et led i kampen mod hele det borgerlige samfund.

(J.H.Leumbach: "Den kristelig-borgerlige Køns-moral" *Clarté* October 1926)

This kind of argument is representative of left-wing attempts to destroy existing prejudices. For example, the Church is blamed for using people's sense of sin and fear of punishment to keep them under its control. Articles along these lines were also written for *Kritisk Revy*; for example, Hans Kirk: "Kan Danmark afkristnes?", or Otto Gelsted: "Med Tanken paa Sacco og Vanzette". The interest of these arguments for our study of *Hærværk* is that they are partly reflected in Jastrau's attitude to sex and relationships with women. For example, his sensual relationships with Johanne and Else are influenced by the fact that one is "bourgeois" and the other would like to be. His sexual complexes also become mixed with his religious complexes - he sees himself as Jesus among the whores - and his fear of syphilis is a mixed up with conceptions of sin. Furthermore, it is clear that Johanne's reference to "communist" beliefs that women should become state property (I, 4), is a distortion of arguments like those mentioned above.

Finally it is worth mentioning the state of Freudianism in Denmark in the late 1920s. It had become very fashionable to talk about Freud but not necessarily to read him. Kristensen describe its tendency to become "en selskabsleg, der kunne være ret ubehagelig, for ikke at sige urkomisk" ("I det freudske Klima" in *Den evige Uro* 1958). Something of that aspect is reflected in Kryger's and Vuldum's attempts to "classify" Jastrau as an "Oedipus". There were also a number of books and articles published on Freud, and in 1930 the first psychoanalytical institute was set up in Denmark. It is clear however that Kristensen himself took a more serious interest and felt particularly affected by what

⁵⁷ For example, the film which is mentioned in the text of *Hærværk*, "Menneskets Svøbe", was in fact a German film shown in Copenhagen in 1926 by "Foreningen til Kønssydommes Bekæmpelse"; it is interesting to note that the programme, in harmony with the growing social awareness, advertised the film as: "Social Film i 5 Akter, som giver en Skildring af den Samfundsfare, som Kønssygdomme frembyder". Newspaper reports indicated the film's popularity.

he read, as we saw in our discussion of *En Anden*⁵⁸. Again in *Hærværk*, Freudian insights become an important part of the meaning, beyond the level of the party game.

"Reality"

Endnu var hallucinationen fast og tydelig. Lundbom tyssede paa den evige Kjær, der venligst slog over i stumsang og aabnede og lukkede munden uden en lyd. Men jorden paa hænderne. Var den virkelig! Der laa et virkeligt lommelærklæde i lommen. Det var fugtigt, lommen var klam. Det var grave med bundvand.
(*Hærværk* IV, 8)

We turn now to the task of laying a basis for comparing *Hærværk* with its contemporaries' views of certain essential aspect of their world. We shall look at two complexes of concepts - the application of the concept "reality" and the opposition of "individual" and "society" - which are closely connected by certain correspondences of usage. So, for example, those people who use "reality" to include the subjective, and sometimes to exclude everything else, are the ones who socially and politically are "individualists" and conservatives. Those who lay all emphasis on some external "objective reality" tend to be "socialist" and reformers. It will however be more convenient to treat the two complexes separately because the first, corresponding with an essential part of Kristensen's emotional experience, is used more fully and with more nuances in *Hærværk*. Kristensen also consciously exploits the second, but, one feels, it is a more intellectualised, reflective consequence of the first.

There are two aspects to contemporary application of the word "virkelighed": there is, first, disagreement about the epistemological use and then there is the more emotive, political appeal for action to be founded on "reality". The tone of the debate over subjectivism and objectivism, which we discussed earlier, became harsher in the later 1920s as the political overtones became more important. For example, in 1929, the left-wing orientated *Monde* claimed, with some but not complete justification, that the debate was won:

⁵⁸ It is symptomatic of the general interest in Freudianism that an article appeared in 1929 by R. Højberg-Pedersen on "Tom Kristensen og Psykoanalysen", (*Politiken* 18 January 1929). Højberg-Pedersen rightly points out the particular importance of Freudianism in *En Anden*. He then begins to exaggerate this analysis and suggests that the meaninglessness of some of Kristensen's poetry is analogical with psychological repression.

Stemningen og den subjektive opfattelse er blevet afløst af tingene og den objektive kendsgerning. Sagligheden har sejret over stemningen.

(*"Den moderne Tidsaand" Monde* November 1929)

The implication of terms such as "Saglighed" - probably borrowed from the contemporary German movement, "die neue Sachlichkeit" - is that the victory has been gained for a socialist-inspired evaluation of priorities. As we shall see, Jastrau follows the change which this victory implies, for he drifts from exclusive preoccupation with himself to recognition and acceptance of external, objective "fact". It is therefore worth following the lines of the general debate. It started with Gelsted's challenge to Westergaard and Thomsen, and continued in the contrast of several religious appraisals of the individual with vociferous efforts of a left-wing minority to call attention to social ill.

Helge Rode was a powerful religious voice in the "Livsanskuelsesdebat", who recognised only what he called the experience of "Personlighed" or "Bevidsthed" or "Sjæl" or "det subjektive"⁵⁹:

Det subjektive er og forbliver det væsentlige. Den Vurdering, som den enkelte foretager i sit Hjerte med en Maalstok, der viser Haab, Sorg og Lykke, den betyder mere end den, der benytter Redskaber, som viser Tal, Maal og Vægt.

(*Pladsen med de grønne Trær* 1924 p. 96)

Rode maintains that the most important part of "real", subjective experience is religious. This is characteristic both for Rode and more importantly will the turn which the debate in general took. The epistemological issues which we traced earlier to the first post-war years were applied to Bible criticism and current attempts to prove the reality of the historical Jesus, and the validity of various kinds of religious experience. Thus the political dimensions of the epistemological issues were mixed up with religious ones. Religious subjectivity was opposed to Socialist objectivity. In later issues of

⁵⁹ Rode was so influential that certain passages and modes of thought in *Hærværk* are directly comparable with Rode's work, particularly because he gives close attention to Nietzsche. For example, the following passage is concerned with the same arguments as are found in Jastrau's first interview with drama:

Nietzsche forblev imidlertid med sin Evighedslængsel i Fysikens og Logikens Verden, og hans System er derfor mere udsat til Angreb end de Religioner, han vilde afløse.

(*Pladsen med de grønne Trær* 1924 p. 25)

Kristensen's personal relationship to Nietzsche and Rode has been commented on by several critics (particularly by Niels Egebak *Tom Kristensen* 1971).

Kritisk Revy, for example, Hans Kirk attacked from a Marxist viewpoint the alliance of Christianity with bourgeois capitalism.

Interest in proving the existence of a historical Jesus was in part provoked by widespread calls for a return to reality, from the flight which had taken place, it was said, in fear of a war-devastated world. Jørgen Bukdahl was an important figure here, who talked of "den forøgede Virkelighedsindsigt" and "Illusionsløshed" (in an exhaustive article on contemporary culture, "Den første Kamp og dens Maal" *Quod Felix* September 1925). Brandes attempted to oppose this new religious fashion by proving that Jesus was as mythical a figure as William Tell, beating theologians at their own game, and then asserting that the whole approach was invalid anyway:

Det anfægter ikke guddommelige Væsener, at de har deres sande Liv, deres eneste Liv, i Menneskenes Sind.

(*Sagnet om Jesus* 1925 p.103)

Such works as Ditlef Nielsen's *Den historiske Jesus* 1924, which led to several newspaper articles, were in his view of little importance⁶⁰. Nonetheless interest continued and for our purposes it is important to remember that, with their claims to scientific method, these people were claiming to deal with "realities" as much as the "objectivists" of the left-wing. Poul Helms' *Jesus og Nutiden* 1927 purports to be a study of the life of Jesus based on a scientific conception of history, in agreement with scientific and psychological laws. Yet, though he refuses many of the miracles, he uses the evidence of visions, in particular Paul's vision on the road to Damascus. He says these can be justified as "reality". Rode goes even further in suggesting that visionary experience is more important than experience of the material world. In his *Det store Ja*, opposing the validity of vision and imagination to reality, he in fact shifts the status of "reality", associated with "validity", over to visionary experience alone. For example, he too discusses Paul's vision:

For Paulus betød denne Indbildning imidlertid mere end alle Oplevelser. Alle haarde og klare Kendsgerninger var intet mod den! Alt virkeligt var uvirkeligt i Sammenligning (...) Se dog nu, hvor Virkeligheden er uvirkelig i Sammenligning.

(*Det store Ja* 1926 p.43)

To take another example, Chr. Reventlow, though not directly concerned with historical truth, discusses the necessity of some criterion of reality. He is not so categorical in his reversal of the usual opposition of the real to the religious, but does cast doubt on usual "objective" conceptions of reality:

⁶⁰ The work by H.C.Stefani which Jastrau's review attacks is clearly an allusion to works like this (*Hærværk* I, 3).

Til den Erkendelse, at meget af det, der antages for Virkelighed, kun er Masker i Mayas Slør, kan vi dog naa.
(*Breve fra Skærsilden* 1924 p.66)

What then is the status of Jastrau's various visions? He accepts them as real, until he sees through his vision of the three Jesuits. Kristensen is thus using and then establishing a definite attitude and relationship - eventually rejection - to these contemporary ideas.

Let us now turn to *Kritisk Revy, Clarté, Monde* and the left-wing which Kristensen began to identify about the time of writing and publishing *Hærværk*. The foreword to the first issue of *Kritisk Revy*, which began as a review for architects, opposed the dream-like, unreal nature of recent architecture:

Derfor er dette Blads Opgave først og fremmest en pædagogisk, paa Trods af disse Aars æstetiske Drømmeri at slaa Virkeligheden fast som Grundlaget for al Drøftelse.

(*Kritisk Revy* July 1926)

This tone was gradually carried over to condemnation of all "aesthetic" approaches to art. Gelsted, inevitably the central figure, is cited by Edv. Heiberg in the second issue. The three movements Gelsted postulates in all art, are, says Heiberg, variously emphasised at different periods; at present we need more concern with "reality", less with "personality" and "form" ("Forsvar for Klassicismen" *Kritisk Revy* October 1926 p.27). Neither Heiberg nor Gelsted use absolute oppositions of "l'art pour l'art" to "reality", the kind of opposition which opposed "l'art pour l'art" to "Tendenslitteratur" as we saw earlier, but it is clear how the two arguments moved in the same direction. In a relatively early article, Gelsted wants to see some compromise:

Kunstværket kan aldrig udtømmende bestemmes gennem en formel æstetisk Betragtning. Kunsten maa ligesom Videnskaben hente sit Stof fra Virkeligheden, og en i Luften frit svævende kunstnerisk Form er altid et Drømmebillede. Men der ligger i Læren om "Kunsten for Kunstens Skyld" gemt den rigtige Tanke, at Kunsten former Virkeligheden paa en særlig Maade, der har sin selvstændige Betydning ved Siden af den Begrebsmæssige og moralske Formning af Virkeligheden.

("Kapital og Kunst" *Clarté* January 1926 p.24)

The same opposition of (negative) dream to (positive) reality is used by Henningsen in "Tradition og Modernisme" (*Kritisk Revy* October 1927) and by Kirk in his accounts of the cultural life of the working classes; for example, it is implied in the title of his article "Om den sociale Ønskedrøm". Clearly, then, they would both be

opposed to the so-called "reality" mission, particularly religious vision.

As the 1920s progressed, more forceful statements were made and it is probably Henningsen's concern with applied arts which leads him to emphasise the artist's duties as well⁶¹:

Sjusker Kunstneren fra sine Pligter, saa skal han have Snuden dyppet i Virkeligheden. Derfor kalder man os ensidige Praktikere. Men er først Virklichkeitssansen gaaet in i dansk anvendt Kunst, saa skal Kunstneren konfronteres med den ideelle Stræben efter Harmoni. Derfor vil man maaske engang kalde os ensidige Æstetiskere.

("Forord" *Kritisk Revy* October 1928)

This kind of statement was however also made about non-applied arts, for example by Hartvig Frisch in the debate we have discussed earlier. The polemical situation leads him to reject absolutely "l'art pour l'art", and to insist on writers turning towards social, material reality:

(der er) ikke eet Felt af det moderne Liv, der ikke berøres af den gigantiske Kamp mellem Kapitalens Besiddere og Arbejdermasserne.

Derfor hungrer Masserne i vor Tid efter en ny Digtning, der er bygget over denne Virkelighed, efter nye Emner og en ny Instilling

(*Litteratur og Kritik af i Dag* 1931 p.22)

Now, the importance of this for our study of *Hærværk* is that it is precisely this kind of reality - the world of economics and finance and the world of poverty - which *Jastrau* awakens to. He even considers the narrowly political implications which might re-convert him to communism. Frisch and his sympathisers obviously consider that *this* is "reality", not the vague inner world of the independent individualist and their emphasis is a result of and is associated with their socialist-inspired politics. Again Kristensen both uses contemporary evaluations of thought and perception and simultaneously adopts a particular attitude towards them. Put in broad terms, his attitude is to accept this version of reality, to the exclusion of "subjective" reality. This either-or choice which we noticed in *Livets Arabesk* and *En Anden* is, it appears, also the

⁶¹ In maintaining the opposition *Kritisk Revy* seeks an ally in *Clarté*, at a point when the latter is still strongly influenced by Barbusse:

Videre skriver Henri Barbusse om Forfatterens Kald ganske analogt med, hvad vi kæmper for med Hensyn til Arkitektens. Og som vi polemiserer han mod de utallige Modstandere, der anser Kunsten for uden Pligter udover det æstetiske (...)

(Review of *Clarté* in *Kritisk Revy* October 1926)

formulation of the possibilities found in contemporary debate. There is no combination or compromise.

We have, in this discussion of conceptions of reality, concentrated on those which are nearest to the usage of *Hærværk* itself. Thus Rode's Catholicism is echoed in Jastrau's confrontations with Garhammer and the arguments against "l'art pour l'art" and for tendentiousness and objective reality proposed by the adherents of *Kritisk Revy* etc. are integrated in Kryger's influence on Jastrau and Jastrau's eventual awakening. These are the groups, figures and ideologies which *Hærværk* makes a positive stand for or against. On the other hand it would be wrong to give the impression that this was a survey of all important groups and we must mention the fact that other political groups also used the catch-word "reality". The so-called new liberalism which was elected into power after the Social Democrats in 1926, was to attempt to solve the economic problems. To do this, they used the very opposite to Socialist methods but nonetheless the Prime Minister justified his measures by the characteristic appeal for "reality":

"Tilpasning til de andre økonomiske Forhold er et uomgængeligt Krav, ikke blot for den offentlige Økonomi, men ogsaa for Erhverslivet. Dette Kravs Opfyldelse betyder, at vi finder tilbage til Virkelighedens faste Grund, og først naar vi finder tilbage til Virkelighedens faste Grund, og først naar vi befinder os dér, kan de lyse Udsigter, der begynder at tone frem i Verden omkring os, blive til Lykke for danske Erhversliv."

(Madsen-Mygdal *Politiken* 1 Jan. 1928)

When liberalism was defeated, the conservatives began to see themselves as an alternative and needed to claim sole right to reality:

Socialisme og Liberalisme mødes i en optimistisk Lykkedrøm. Blot Teorierne følges, vil Paradiset paa Jorden være sikret for Tid og Evighed. Konservatismen ejer ikke denne lyse Tro. Den ønsker først og fremmest at havde nøgtern Respekt for Virkeligheden.

(Alfred Bindlev: "Konservatisme og Liberalisme" *Det nye Danmark* II 1930 p.140)

It is not clear that the appeal for "realism" was a powerful emotive political weapon. If it was not a concept used only by the left-wing. What the passages quoted above show is that there was a general tendency and necessity to become concerned with economic questions as a natural result of the general economic crisis. Nonetheless it is in the detail of what they understand by "reality" and what they oppose to it that the different groups and parties

differ and it is in the detail that we feel justified in comparing *Hærværk* to the left-wing conception⁶².

"Individual and "society"

Nej, han anmeldte ikke en forbrydelse.
Det var samfundets opave, og saa var det ikke hans
opgave, for staten, det er ikke mig."
(*Hærværk* IV, 7)

The opposition of individual to society which lies behind Jastrau's contorted vision of the Sun King's "L'État, c'est moi", is a basic trait of much thinking in the late 1920s. This is not to say that when pressed, people would maintain that "individualism" was irreconcilable with "socialism". It means though that statements and arguments were formulated as if one of the alternatives or even a reconciliation of the two would solve contemporary problems - as if this were the fundamental issue. It is of course difficult to say why a particular issue becomes a panacea, but there are several factors which may have influenced people. Most obviously, the resurrection of liberalism in government led to discussion of its fundamentals and how these could be adopted to a modern state. In the background was the apparent failure of democracy in Germany and France to stabilise itself and its environment, contrasted with some admiration for Mussolini's ability to handle Italy alone. On the other hand, Soviet communism and the internecine struggle for leadership tended to undermine faith in a solution from that direction and the Social Democrats had failed as a government in Denmark. Finally, there was considerable distrust of "Americanism", with its impersonal levelling of the variety of life in an increasingly mechanised society.

It is again useful to consider *Kritisk Revy* here. It is symptomatic that just as there were attempts to combine "realism" and tendentiousness with "aestheticism", some of the writers also tried to straddle both individualism and "socialism", that is to combine the needs and interests of the, often privileged, individual with concern about the development of society and large-scale problems. People who reviewed *Kritisk Revy*, - Ove Rode in *Politiken* 23 April 1997, Andreas Vinding in *Politiken* 27 January 1928 - tended to pick

⁶² Further justification is afforded by Kristensen's statements in interviews in which he aligned himself with the left and uses their language. cf. "Gennem Detentionslokalet - en Time med Tom Kristensen" *Politiken* 17 November 1929 and "Marxisme -! En Samtale med Tom Kristensen" *Ekstrabladet* 4 April 1931.

out its position within the individual/society opposition as a fundamental issue. The result of riding two horses was that individualists believed it was allied with their political opponents, while the political left considered it to be opposed to them. This is particularly clear in Vinding's article:

... ingen frisindet Læser kan dog for alle disse Fortrin overse, at Bladet er saa ensidig socialt indstillet, at det anderkender Betydningen af den frie Kunst og den Individualisme, uden hvilket Samfundet vilde visne (...) Allerbesynderligst er det, at *Kritisk Revy* fra socialdemokratisk Side hidtil nærmest har mødt en spidsborgerlig Modvilje, og at Partiet ikke indser, at der her er født den sociale Tanke et fuldbaarent og livskraftigt Drengbarn (...)

It is also symptomatic that we can find articles on the conservative side which divide the political parties according to the same opposition. The Liberals are too individualist, the socialists give too much control to the state, but the conservatives combine the best of both, (e.g. Ove Lundbye: "Hvad er Konservatisme?" *Det nye Danmark* 1930 III p.222)

What is the importance of all this for *Hærværk*? It can be indicated in Kristensen's own appeal to artists to "become political" (*Kunst Økonomi Politik* 1932). The opposition individual/society exists at first for Jastrau, as it did for Baumann and Rasmussen, as an existential contrast of the inner and outer world, the self and others. Gradually, however, under the particular influence of Kryger, Jastrau is forced to realise that his personal, existential choice corresponds with a political choice. Or at least that is the way things are made to look in the atmosphere of the late 1920s. It is probably because this issue is forced on him from outside that Jastrau and the author do not feel it as so essentially part of experience as, for example, the differing conceptions of reality. It is something brought in at the end, something which is not examined in its nuances and implications as "reality" is. The fact that Kristensen could not resist the change from the personal to the political - an intellectual rather than emotional decision - shows how closely bound he was to his age, how he felt he had to respond to cultural debate. Finally, Jastrau's response remains ambiguous and unsettled. The author's attitude is less easy to define, and we shall return to these questions later.

Analysis of the text

We turn now to consider and interpret *Hærværk* proper. In doing so, we shall support in more detail the statements about the novel's

meaning with which we have so far sought to link it with facets of cultural and political life in the late 1920s. Furthermore we shall eventually have to reconsider what we have discussed until now in order to state more exactly the novel's significance with respect to contemporary ideas and ideologies. On the other hand the novel will lead us far beyond simple links with contemporary life, for in comparison with, for example, *Livets Arabesk*, with which it has many traits in common, *Hærværk* is a more tightly knit, complex whole, which penetrates far into the being of Ole Jastrau and his environment, beyond the minor tension which first cracks the surface. It is an indication of the tightness and the quality of the novel that one of our problems in presenting an interpretation is to do justice to a sense of the whole while discussing individual aspects. It has long been one of the difficulties, *Hærværk* has caused critics, that in superficial analysis it appears chaotically unstructured when in fact, as we feel in the process of reading, everything is economically bound together. There is then the danger of interpreting odd themes but missing their meaning within the whole, or, aware of the coherence, we feel dissatisfied with our interpretation of the parts. We shall attempt to overcome the difficulty as we advance, having stated it here; for the moment, we draw attention to Hanne Marie Svendsen's article on *Hærværk* in which she points out that the repetition of particular passages is a symptom of a general principle in the novel: repetition is a device to hold it together, but a device which corresponds with Jastrau's deepest experience⁶³.

Infinity, the soul and reality

Hærværk is the account of Jastrau's progress⁶⁴ through a crisis, in which he turns away from one kind of life, plunges into "dissolution" and re-emerges. The crisis helps him to a balanced position from

⁶³ Hanne Marie Svendsen: "Hærværk" in *Omkring Hærværk* ved Aage Jørgensen 1969 p.103.

⁶⁴ Raymond Williams' characterisation of *Hærværk* as "process", opposed to "product", describes the mode in which Jastrau's progress is recorded:

(...) the highly self-conscious prose, working its way, with intense effort, and with continual inspection of itself - what is called an awareness of "style" - into experiences which stand on their own, and which are only obliquely or by inference connected with developments through time and persons, with the general rather than an internal extension and continuity. ("Intensely observing, bloodshot eyes" in *Omkring Hærværk* ved Aage Jørgensen 1969 p.122)

Jastrau's experience might have been presented as "product", but would still have been "progress". We have therefore avoided borrowing Williams' term, and use the slightly more awkward "progress".

which he can recognise and pass judgement on his experience. It is important to remember however that Jastrau's final position is in fact analogous to the author's position from the beginning. Having mentioned this point, we shall leave the discussion of the authorial position until later.

To begin, we can say that the elemental feature of Jastrau's progress is the opposition of "soul" and "reality". This is both a paraphrase of the text and an abstraction from it, because Jastrau uses these two categories to describe his experience but the experience presents itself in a wealth of detail which fill out the abstracts. The opposition acts as a conceptual frame of reference. The significance of pointing out that this is an opposition and as such is present from the beginning is that the normal association of "reality" and "validity" pre-judges the experience of "soul" as invalid. The language of the novel remains "normal" even when Jastrau tends to turn the associations upside down.

We find the opposition in Jastrau's first conversation with Garhammer:

"Jeg interesserer mig egentlig kun for mig selv ... ja, altsaa for psykologien, hvad der er paa bunden af sjælen, og saa - ja. Det interesserer mig, hvorledes jeg faar en objektiv verden bygget op, en virkelighed."

(Part II, Chap. 1)

Jastrau's crisis can be described as disgust with objective reality and an attempt to find a reality within his self, thus erasing the normal opposition of subject and object by ignoring the objective. His disgust is first expressed in symbols familiar from *Livets Arabesk*: people do not see each other but only the mask-like exterior - this falseness is heightened by donning a dinner suit and taking part in social occasions like Krog's cocktail party; like the curtain which hides Else from Jastrau, he feels that the world of material things is only the curtain hiding reality. This is similar to the allusions to Maya's veil in *Livets Arabesk*:

Hvad vidste folk om ham? Vidste de, hvor han kom fra? Og hvad vidste han om dem? Det var masker alle sammen, det var et forhæng med billeder af huse, butikker, udhængsskabe, fortove, fodgangere og cyklister, der var blevet trukket for virkeligheden.

(II, 3)

The only part of external reality Jastrau feels properly in contact with is his home and family, which are felt to be separate from the world of society. Yet he withdraws even from these, for he feels that they disappear into the anonymous distance of a telephone.

In the depths of his crisis Jastrau is fascinated by Steffensen's vision of the flat as a ship at sea⁶⁵. This becomes the central image containing Jastrau's subjective perception of his world, that is, the "reality" of the soul. It appears forcefully at the end when Jastrau sees the "wreck" of his burnt-out flat, and then recalls Steffensen's poem "Jeg har længtes mod skibskatastrofer" When Jastrau first read that poem he felt it contained more reality than Sanders' and Steffensen's political activity and in his crisis the image and its content seem to be more real and valid than external reality. This is where Jastrau overturns ordinary associations of concepts and language, for "reality" becomes invalid and the "soul" becomes valid. In contrast, however, the textual, authorial presentation maintains that this is a simple image, and does not fully accept Jastrau's version: the image remains a literary device and does not become reality.

After the crisis, which is a dissolution of his married life and the values marriage represents for him (i.e. Part III - For Stedse), Jastrau slowly returns to "reality", that is to the normal conception of valid reality. First, in explaining to Luise Kryger that he has chased after "visions", he categorises subjective experience according to normal usage. He suggests by his question that his experience was artificial: "Kender De det, at man slaar sig selv i øjet for at se syner, flamme-syner" (IV, 1). Moreover, doubt is cast on the visions when they are parroted by Kjær's vision of the beginnings of a white mouse - to see such a vision is his declared aim in being a drunk (IV, 2). Another crucial weakening of his visionary experience occurs when Jastrau finds he can stare through and dissolve his vision of the three Jesuits (IV, 3). He exaggerates this triumph into the belief that everything is hallucination that he is not touched by anything, including the fate of Anna Marie:

Hvad vedkommer det mig, - alt sammen, - alt sammen.
Det er ikke mere virkeligt en de tre sorte mænd. Dem
kunne jeg se igennem, og de opløste sig, - og nu kan jeg
snart se tværs igennem det hele, - og saa opløser det
sig, hele den forbandede hallucination.
(IV, 7)

In calling his experience hallucination, Jastrau takes up again the conceptual opposition which the text and reader have maintained throughout, for through association with "hallucination" the experiences of the soul lose their validity and reality. Then, by calling all experience hallucination, he temporally denies all validity and consequently falls into desperation and loss. In this state, he wakes to the elemental sensation of earth and water felt on his

⁶⁵ Since Kristensen has mentioned Rimbaud and Verlaine as models for Steffensen and Jastrau, the force of the image may owe something to Rimbaud's "Le Bateau Ivre", (cf. *Tom på Thurø* 1971 p.42).

hands - these two elements complement the effects of a third, the fire - and he is restored to a valid reality. There remains however some doubt and ambiguity about how long the effects will last. At the decisive moment, when the "hallucination" of the bar and the "real" sensation of earth and water both force themselves on Jastrau, no absolute triumph is decided. He feels "reality" strongly, perceiving it as a symbolic death, with the earth beneath his dying body. Yet Kjær's hymn, as well as complementing the image of death, is a typical part of the hallucination and surges strongly at the end. The hymn also has a third dimension of meaning for it optimistically promises - particularly in the missing last line: "dog Livets Kilde springer, hvor evig den sprang" - some complement to the "soul" in an external life force. The reader is nonetheless left wondering if the change which Jastrau had felt, in the open air, as a "movement of the self" was indeed strong enough to last. Jastrau accepts "reality", the values of economic and financial reality represented by Kryger, (IV, 8), but the tone of the epilogue suggests passive escape rather than decided activity. We shall return to this later, but the point to be made here is that normal conceptions of reality, maintained textually even in the crisis, are openly restored to their dominant position⁶⁶.

After tracing Jastrau's progress in terms of the basic categories, we need to look more closely at their contents. The key conception in Jastrau's experience of "soul" is infinity (uendelighed). Already in *Livets Arabesk* and *En Anden*, individuals have a strong sense of insignificance in relation to an infinite vastness of space. In *Hærværk*, Jastrau talks of Einsteinian space and the fourth dimension, which is essentially an intellectual mode of appreciating the individual's emotional situation, but one has the impression that Einsteinian space is felt more than understood by Jastrau. The introduction of Einstein's name has the effect of linking Jastrau's and Kristensen's personal experience to the general condition of man which Einsteinian thought revealed. It is personal experience of

⁶⁶ One of Kristensen's critical articles in 1931 is interesting in this respect because its unfair generalisation, which he was soon forced to retract, is, one feels, an effect from *Hærværk*. He avoids the abstract debate on realities and condemns the Jastrau-like attitudes to experience which he finds in his contemporaries:

Dansk Digtning taget som Helhed er saaledes ikke kommet Virkeligheden et Skridt nærmere, end den var for ti Aar siden. Eller for at forskaane sig selv for Diskussioner om, hvad der er Virkelighed, og hvad der ikke er det: den Virkelighed, som ung dansk Digtning er ved at udforme, hvor talentfuld det end er gjort, er mindst lige saa selvmodsigende som den lyriske Virkelighed, der skabtes i Gullaschtidens værste og nu af alle fordømte Periode.

("Fremtidens Digttere" *Ekstrabladet* 26 March 1931)

godless, amoral infinity of emptiness which propels Jastrau into a search into the soul.

Jastrau believes that the sense of the infinite is necessary for him to write poetry and, regretting the loss of youth and poetry, he tries to regain them by regaining the real, rather than drunken, sense of infinity:

Nej. Man skal have rum omkring sig for at skrive digte. Gaa og drive, inden man skrive dem, og vide, at man kan gaa og drive, naar de er skrevet. – Dovenskab. Nej. Kosmisk lediggang, det er det, man skal have tid til, ellers bliver der ingen vers her. Nej – nu kan jeg kun naa den rumfornemmelse, den frugtbare, ved en sjus – men naar jeg drikker, saa kan jeg ikke skrive.

(I, 1)

Youth and poetry were abandoned when he took on responsibility as an ordinary citizen, that is, when he married and became a paid newspaper critic. He sees both these lost ideals personified by Steffensen and his attraction to Steffensen is essentially the hope of undoing the effect of time, of renouncing what he feels was a self-betrayal.

Yet there is more to Jastrau's plunge into the soul and the desire to write. Insignificant in infinity, Jastrau assumes that it is empty of God and therefore the final authority to justify particular morality. As Steffensen says, the awareness of drifting into infinite emptiness might lead to irresponsibility and crime:

“Vi flyder mod uendeligheden. Ikke du? Vi lader alt ske. Vi er uendelige sjæle, ikke? (...) Men saa maa vi jo ogsaa helt ud i forbrydelsen (...)”

(III, 1)

This consequence is a central feature of *Hærværk*, which examines the amorality of absolute individualism. In his first conversation with Garhammer, Jastrau implicitly denies the possibility of a Christian, imposed morality when he denies the logical proof of the world's beginning and therefore of its creation by God. For Garhammer, on the contrary, the strength of the Catholic Church is in its logical dogma, without which one becomes amoral, a sinner or, as he says "a moral idiot". Jastrau's refusal to accept "logic" and Steffensen's refusal to abandon it are thus two aspects of the struggle for morality and a secure basis for existence. Though Steffensen experiences the amorality of infinity like Jastrau, he cannot accept the consequence of the immorality and crime. Though he considered murdering Anna Marie, which would resolve his feeling of ridicule and inferiority vis à vis his father, he cannot do it. He needs a sequence of thought logically leading to morality:

“Kan du da ikke forstaar det? (...) et jeg tænker haardt, lægger haardt paa haardt, og saa – ja, at jeg saa altid kommer til et blødt punkt (...)”
(III, 4)

The only course open to him among the alternatives offered in the novel is the escape into the logic of Catholicism, which Jastrau had rejected and now ridicules. It is noteworthy that Jastrau, aware of his moral confusion, is consistent in his refusal to use the other possible moral system, the court of law personified by the policeman. He does not report the "murder" of Anna Marie because he does not feel in harmony with the moral code of the state:

Hvem var han, Jastrau, at han skulle vove at anmelde en morder? En forbrydelse? Vidste han, hvad en forbrydelse var? Havde han moralsk lov til at anmelde en forbrydelse? Anmeldte han en forbrydelse? Nej, han anmeldte ikke en forbrydelse.
(IV, 7)

This is a result of his attempt to find a valid response to infinity, to the emptiness (tomhed) which means absence of morality and security. The response is an attempt to "feel" the emptiness in experience of the soul:

Ind i uendeligheden? Men var det ikke at drikke sig bedøvet? Aa jo, der var noget religiøst i at drikke sig fra sans og samling. Al tomhedsfornemmelse forsvandt. Man fyldte rummet med sit støjende, lallende, drukne jeg, hele rummet.
(III, 3)

Yet this description itself contains an awareness of the final inadequacy of the response. For Jastrau's using the word "religious" - he also describes his drinking to Luise Kryger as a substitute for religion - means that the response is characterised as an escape like Steffensen's Catholicism. For in Jastrau's vocabulary, religion is the antonym of reality and validity.

What Jastrau finds in the soul is "repetition" (gentagelse). His experience repeats itself and the narrative detail conveys the repetition directly, when scenes are repeated with almost word for word similarity - the most obvious examples are the description of the waiting rooms, Garhammer's and the doctor's, and of the two drives to Charlottenlund⁶⁷. Once he recognises the repetition, Jastrau feels oppressed by it and wants to throw it off:

⁶⁷ Repetition as technique has been discussed and illustrated by Aage Jørgensen ("Tom Kristensens roman *Hærværk*" *Danske Studier* 57 1962 p.48) and Hanne Marie Svendsen: "Hærværk" in *Omkring Hærværk* ved Aage Jørgensen 1969.

Pateren havde s'gu ret. Det er paa gentagelserne, man skal kende helvedet.

(IV, 5)

This is a stage in Jastrau's return to a normal conception of reality. The words he remembers here were Garhammer's characterisation of Nietzsche's "eternal recurrence", in the discussion of explanations of the world's creation. By applying Garhammer's words to his personal experience, Jastrau transposes the Nietzschean conception from the level of world to the level of individual. Or, in his attempt to find a substitute in the soul for an imposed, dogmatic account of existence and morality, he raises his personal experience to the level of an account of the world. He finds the account too full of despair and is forced back from the soul into reality

His return includes a renewal of interest in other people, which contrasts with the amorality of his extreme individualism. Where amorality had been part of the emptiness of space, his new interest is conveyed by the image of hands filling space. The sound of an ambulance pierces his individualist world and reminds him of his love and responsibility for Oluf:

Men med gribende hænder. En dreng staar ved afgrund, og saa kommer de gribende hænder (...) Hænder. Hænder. Rummet er fuldt af hænder. Og de efterligner, de imiterer. Truer man, saa truer alle hænder.

(IV, 6)

Irresponsibility, which is characteristic for Jastrau from the beginning, is closely allied to amorality. He *shuns* contact with other people, the beggar, Sanders and Steffensen, and he hides behind his work or behind a bottle. He needs to create a certain distance between them and himself:

Men allerede nu, da han holdt flasken ind til sig, følte han en blank og skinnende ro (...)

Gæsterne blev afklarede, mere plastiske, mere objektive. De blev mennesker uden for ham selv. Han kunne omgaas dem. Medens de før havde været dele af hans eget jeg, onde aander i hans indre, hallucinationer han ikke kunne frigøre sig for - forfølgere.

(I, 1)

Jastrau's individualism, which Sanders contrasts with his own communism, is already present ready to develop into the subsequent crisis. In that crisis his political, aesthetic neutrality develops into disregard for other people; he gambles for possession of Anna Marie. In helping Else, as a token of his love for Oluf, Jastrau feels the implication of human responsibility and independence without, as we saw earlier, accepting the moral system of the state, the code of laws, and without accepting identity with the state - "Staten, det er ikke mig". In the final analysis,

Hærværk is a moral novel, re-enforcing the humanist, inter-individualist morality while rejecting equally the morality of state and church and the voice of the soul's extreme individualism. Rejecting the state tended to imply, in contemporary associations, rejecting the state-centred politics and morality of socialism and communism.

We are now in a position to improve our discussion of the significance of Jastrau's return to reality and responsibility in relationship to contemporary thought. We mentioned there the current position of individualism and socialism, and suggested that Jastrau's final position is ambiguous in relationship to the opposition. It is ambiguous because of the third element, humanist inter-individualism, which cannot be properly subsumed under either of the other two. Where contemporary thinking however only allows the two possibilities, there is a tendency to force the third element into the category of socialism and to classify the novel as "socialist" - as Hans Kirk did in his review (in *Social-Demokraten* 27 May 1931). In a sense, Tom Kristensen himself followed this tendency by temporarily declaring himself a Marxist (for example in "Marxisme - ! En samtale med Tom Kristensen" *Ekstrabladet* 4 April 1931), and by indulging in vulgar-Marxist criticism and exhortation in *Kunst Økonomi Politik*. That he soon abandoned this stance is not surprising if we keep in mind the contrasting humanism of *Hærværk*, which was thus only temporarily denied.

Politics, ideologies and money

We have seen how contemporary developments force a political significance on the epistemological position of "soul" and "reality". Yet it is also true that the novel contains the political associations and implicitly makes them part of its meaning, for it contains an account of the openly political debate and brings the political and the epistemological together. It brings them together as an integrated part of Jastrau's experience and, secondly, through Sanders' and Kryger's assertions that Jastrau's "apolitical" beliefs are in fact undeniably political.

We can begin by examining Jastrau's attitude to communism. Jastrau's disgust with the false, masked world of reality is evoked especially by the "bourgeois" society in which he lives and works. He feels it at a cocktail party and on election evening in the newspaper building. However, he also feels the same disgust with the self-professed opponents of the bourgeoisie, the communists - represented by Sanders. From the beginning, Sanders' love of acting the role of the revolutionary - with specially chosen clothing

and specially studied poses - makes him, in Jastrau's eyes, false and immature.

Jastrau associates immaturity with communism because it was part of his own youth. It is a part which he feels he has outgrown and does not want to regain. In contrast he does want to regain his former ability to write poetry, which appears to him as a lost ideal. Yet the two were originally related, as the poem quoted by Steffensen shows:

Moder, madonna og krigskammerat,
elskede kvinde og lyse soldat,
revolutionernes moder.

(I, 1)

(The poem also implies a connection between sexual complexes and political beliefs which we shall discuss later.) Jastrau's refusal to return to the communism of his youth takes the form of a confrontation of character with Sanders and of a more rational disappointment with communism as an effective force. Jastrau sees that Sanders is attached to communism because it gives him safe, ready-formulated opinions and also makes them attractive to women. In the final confrontation (III, 3), he feels superior to Sanders because he realises that Sanders' adoption of communism is based on a need to be surrounded by people and feel important: "Han havde glemt, at Sanders aldrig var alene". Thus Jastrau has finished with Sanders:

Noget var blevet besluttet, lydløst. Ikke retfærdigt, ikke uretfærdigt, men nødvendigt og klart (...) Der var sat kryds ved Sanders. Og straks var hævnlysten kølnet.

(III, 3)

His desire to avenge the "communist's" denunciation of his "bourgeois" marriage has been cooled in a non-ideological clash of personalities which decisively rids him of his former immaturity. It is worth noting too, how the writer, through narrative devices, supports Jastrau in all this. For at two points Sanders' dogmatism is ridiculed. First, he automatically presumes that Jastrau has, in the "normal" way, bought tin soldiers for Oluf, but Oluf does not understand what he is talking about because he possesses no tin soldiers. The narrative comment is ironic:

Men Sanders lod sig ikke standes af denne hindring.
Stemmen blev kun mørkere og stærkere, skøn af hellig indignation, og med en umotiveret stigning i tonefaldet, en profetisk vrede, talte han videre (...)

(I, 1)

Later, Sanders assumed that Jastrau has as a "typical" bourgeois, suppressed his wife's intellectual freedom, but the narrative vindicates Jastrau, for it is Johanne and not her husband who has read the magazine in question, "Hammeren" (I,4). Jastrau's more

rational reason for rejecting what in the epilogue he calls "emotional communism" (stemningskommunisme), is its failure, in Denmark, to seize the only real opportunity offered - the Easter crisis of 1920. He describes it in bitter and satirical tone:

"Jeg tror ikke paa nogen revolution her i landet ... Det har danskerne ikke karakter nok til. Uh jeg kunne have lyst til at skrive en bog om dansk nationalkarakter, om falsk blaaøjethed og blond upaalidelighed."
(I, 4)

The important point, however, is that irrespective of his emotions and reasonings, Jastrau is so bound to "bourgeois" life and thought that he could not return to communism. Bourgeois life, for him, is epitomised in the need to work in order to pay bills:

Hvor var det længe siden, han selv havde skrevet en bog! Nu var det altid en andens bog, som ventede paa at blive læst, anmeldt! Og nu maatte betales! Ustraffet er man ikke borger.
(I, 6)

In connection with this, one incident is particularly revealing. Jastrau is arrested for the same offence as the communists had faced, disturbing the peace (gadeuorden). Because Jastrau is arrested for drunkenness, the communists' offence is also reduced to this level of triviality. On the other hand, Jastrau pays his fine, as a respectable member of society, whereas the communists refuse to do so on principle. Jastrau recognises that he is thus yielding to social pressure, but his shame makes him pay nonetheless. Moreover, even the way he attempts to escape society by drinking in the Bar des Artistes, is part of society's way of life. For the bar, where his rights depend on his ability to pay, contrasts with one moment when he was really outside society, lying in the moat:

For nu havde han penge paa lommen. Nu havde han ret til alt (...) For hvor mange timer? Hvad vidste han? I morges havde han som en vagabond ligget derude paa den nøgne jord, og i aften var alle musikkens toner, alle de oplyste ruder, barens dunkle hygge, isens knasen i cocktailrysteren hans.
(IV, 8)

The word "vagabond" in the last quotation is important. Essentially it describes the way Jastrau wants to escape and explains his attraction to Steffensen. For Steffensen is not properly a communist like Sanders but a vagabond who is incompatible with the bourgeois way of life in a different way. This is apparent from the moment he enters Jastrau's flat, in the way he feels uncomfortable with the furniture, in the way he avoids Johanne, the personification of

bourgeoisie. When he comes back a second time he is described as follows:

Han opførte sig nærmest som en vagabond i en fornem lejlighed, dæmpet og mysteriøs.
(II, 2)

Nonetheless, although Jastrau lets himself be influenced by Steffensen because he wants to regain the ability to write and the independence which Steffensen has, such independence cannot remain apolitical as he would like. To attain the sense of independence, he has to abandon his post as critic, which means refusing to continue to serve bourgeois-dominated society. He had already felt disgusted with his social duty of opinion-making⁶⁸, as is evident in the first chapter:

Man bliver skør i hovedet af at læse alle de gale meninger, andre har. – Jo, s’gu – alle meninger er gale.

His disgust is fostered by Sanders' accusations that the newspaper is not really interested in the opinions for their own sake but in their sale-ability. This is a blow to Jastrau's face-saving belief that he is after all working for a radical organ. His brother-in-law's suggestions that the writer should simply give shape to other people's opinions brings the point home to him in its ridiculous exaggeration. It forces Jastrau to see his connection with the paper in this light, and his reaction, which has evidently been building up before the appearance of Sanders and Steffensen, is to look for creative freedom in drink and "the soul". It is clear in the first chapter that the bottle of port hopes to overcome a sense of estrangement from his family and his work. Later, estrangement becomes a bad conscience vis à vis his earlier life:

Det var umulige arbejdsforhold, han levede under. Jo vist. Man kunne ikke være helt ærlig, naar man skulle tjene penge. Men var han ikke ærlig, ærlig i sine anmeldelser? Jo, jo. Han skaffede sig uvenner paa dem. Men hvorfor havde han daarlig samvittighed, for det havde han? Det var som en straf, der havde ramt ham indvendig fra. Og den havde ramt ham, saa snart han var blevet anmelder ved "Dagbladet". Aa, gud give, han kunne finde ud af, hvad der havde været hans synd. Han

⁶⁸ Tom Kristensen himself accepted an invitation to speak, but only in order to criticise the opinion-makers and turn his appeal to the young to "live life dangerously":

Hver Dag dukker en ny Profil op, vi er blevet fyldt med Ord, men desværre har alt for faa Kvalme. Vi er et Land fyldt med Foreninger og med forjagede Formænd, der mindst hver Lørdag skal skaffe Foredragsholdere, som siger Dumheder, saa at der bliver Lejlighed til Diskussion!
("Rusgildet i Studentersamfundet" *Politiken* 3 October 1926)

havde været ærlig, bundærlig; men hvorfor var han da stagneret, blevet gold, hvorfor?

(II, 6)

It is clear from what he thinks on the election night that his critical attacks had been limited to the occasional subordinate clause in a review. This does not still his conscience, although basically Jastrau does not like polemic and unfriendly relations - with the editorial secretary or Vuldum for example. Essentially therefore, if it is possible to separate the two, Jastrau's break with bourgeois life is due to his need to write rather than his desire to become politically active. The point however remains that the break has political dimensions whether he wants that or not. The loss of his political ability is somehow a result of his political affiliation to "Dagbladet".

The vagabond in Jastrau's interpretation is an internal exile not concerned with society. He only properly becomes a vagabond within society at one point, when he feels unmoved and strange in the would-be bourgeois furnishings of Else's flat:

En saadan seng var altsaa idealet (...) Rokoko og orient og eventyr - og borgerlighed. Han følte sig som en vagabond.

(IV, 6)

Yet ultimately Jastrau shuns complete isolation from society and is afraid of being forced back to be in the moat, which is the only moment of absolute "vagabondage" outside society. He is, in other words, afraid of being without money, whose power he is forced to recognise in the epilogue. There, he has to take money from Kjær and realises that he is now like the beggar who had disturbed him in the first chapter. The similarity between the beggar and the vagabond - the similarity marked by the narrative device of presenting Sanders and Steffensen and later Steffensen and Anna Marie in the same situation, knocking on the door of the "bourgeoisie" - the similarity is confirmed. Both are ultimately dependent on and tied to the world of money and bills, which for Jastrau is the world of the bourgeois.

The question of material wealth runs throughout the novel, underpinning Jastrau's view directly and through symbolism. His attitude to money and the security it symbolises is central rather than incidental to his relationship to what he calls the bourgeoisie. What he calls "earthly goods" are strictly part of his marriage, which he feels is an alliance with the bourgeoisie and therefore a betrayal of his own background. When the marriage collapses, his material wealth, the household paid for by Johanne's parents, is taken away. In particular the rococo chairs he had bought to satisfy social ambition from his childhood - "de mindede mig om stolene paa mit dukketeater (...) kongens slot i 'Fyrtøjet' og 'Klods Hans' " (I, 1) -

symbolised the bourgeois lifestyle. He finds the same social ambition in the furnishings of Else's flat (cf. quotation earlier). Also the oval shape of the chairs, noticed as the shape of a picture frame (II, 3), has the same symbolic meaning. His attention is specifically drawn to it when he visits Else for the second time, when he explicitly characterises it, like the oriental bed, as banally bourgeois. The importance of this apparently trivial detail becomes clear in the epilogue when Jastrau stares at the money he has begged from Kjær and find the same shape: "Et Hermeshoved i en oval". He is reminded that his dependence on money is dependence on bourgeois values.

Not only Jastrau's marriage is an ultimately financial arrangement, whereby his duty is to pay bills and provide for his family, even in separation as his brother-in-law insists. Many other relationships are coloured by money. Most obvious is his relationship with Else, but Luise Kryger also introduces the same element by urging her husband to lend Jastrau money. He himself lends money to both Vuldum and Steffensen who both abused the system - Steffensen borrows to buy drink, Vuldum "buys" a present for Garhammer which will probably never be paid for. Jastrau feels indebted to Garhammer for the broken pane and the supposedly unworldly priest is surprisingly familiar with money.

Behind all this lies Jastrau's implicit attitude to money which Steffensen voices. When Jastrau suggests publishing Steffensen's poem, the latter replies:

"Naa, er det kønt nok til at blive prostitueret."
(I, 4)

Prostitution is personified by Else, Steffensen feels that his art is prosecuted and Jastrau as critic prostitutes himself to the superficial, masked world of opinion-making:

"Ja, en forretning i meninger," indskød Jastrau for at sige noget. Meninger! Noget saa skyggeagtigt som meninger! Men hvorfor blev mennesker ogsaa skygger, naar de solgte deres meninger? Vi skygger, vi handler med skygger.
(I, 5)

By breaking away from the newspaper, he rejects simultaneously the notion that art should be silent about economic affairs, which Jastrau, in agreement with Kryger, feels are the most important social force. It is then Kryger's political argument which makes Jastrau fully realise his economic dependence and consequent lack of intellectual freedom⁶⁹. Though he tries to escape into an apolitical

⁶⁹ It is symptomatic of the politicised nature of the late 1920s that Kryger's attack on Jastrau, in many respects similar to Ducker's attack on

situation, he has ultimately to admit that he has not really escaped economic dependence; money still set the limits:

Men Kjær havde formue, bestyret af en sagfører, den ormstukne kindtand. Det koster penge at gaa i hundene. (...) Skulle han tælle pengene? Jeg kan ikke drikke mig ihjel, for jeg maa være ædru for at tjene de penge, jeg skal drikke op. Jeg har ikke raad til at drikke. Eller hvorledes? Det kunne blive til en aforisme.

(IV, 4)

What is here a sense of being ridiculous grows into an awareness of acting immorally, and by seeing himself in this light Jastrau reveals his continuing allegiance to "ordinary", bourgeois values. Another aphorism condemns Jastrau's moment of vagabondage, his night in the moat:

Egentlig var det hotelbedrageri, saadan at gaa ind, uden en øre i lommen, og bestille et værelse (...) Men alt er bedrageri, naar man ingen penge har.

(IV, 8)

Money is a moral force in practice even though he had wanted to escape precisely because he felt he could not be honest when forced to earn money. This paradox is symptomatic of Jastrau's experience: the escape which is still limited, the morality which is immoral.

The purpose of this section has been to show how the political significance of the novel is anticipated in the novel's own world of meaning. The political categories which exist in the context are used also in the text. They are used to show that all Jastrau's experience and action, whether he will not, has political meaning and is governed by political forces. A particularly influential political force is money and the social system it represents. Jastrau is ultimately caught by the system because he cannot free himself of his dependence on money. Although it is a Marxist-based achievement to recognise the fundamental influence of economics, and although Jastrau knows this, in practice he is bound to the bourgeois world, and accepts his fate. In so far as the narrative does not criticise Jastrau's view of himself and his inevitable attachment to bourgeois society through money, but rather sustains him, it appears that the author is also caught in the same system of values with the same view. If this is so, it is hardly surprising that, as Jastrau rejects "emotional communism" (Epilog), so eventually Kristensen was bound to abandon his association with Marxism. He was perhaps "bound" to do so at a level he did not consciously admit. At a conscious level however the rejection of emotional communism is in keeping with the fundamental humanism we discussed above and

Pram (*Livets Arabesk* II, 4), is framed in political terms, where the earlier passage was in existential terms.

also in keeping with Kristensen's cultivation of his innate scepticism. In an interview in 1936, he said:

“Jeg regner med, at jeg er en religiøs Karakter, men der er saa meget Videnskabsmand i mig, at jeg er klar over, at enhver Religion er en Ønske-Drøm, og jeg er snart bange for, at være Fanatiker og Skeptiker paa en Gang, og det er blevet min kranke Skæbne.”
 (“Mod den yderste Rand” *B.T.* 16 September 1936)

Sexual and generational complexes

In discussing Jastrau's malaise at being part of bourgeois society, we mentioned that he suffers from pangs of conscience vis à vis his youth. It is clear then that if we now examine more closely the theme of generational conflict in the novel, we are simply approaching the whole complex of Jastrau's experience from another angle. Essentially this theme is complementary to and integrated with the others, and as we shall see has itself several integrated aspects.

The two most evident aspects are functions of Jastrau's relationship to Sanders and Steffensen. Their sudden appearance and appeal for help make him feel old:

De slog sig hurtigt til ro, følte sig straks hjemme. Han havde altsaa det rette sind, dette grænseløse sind, som ungdommen elsker. Ungdommen? Han var fireogtredive aar. Ikke ung. Ikke ung. Var det allerede blevet hans tur til andægtigt at bøje hovedet og lytte?

(I, 2)

Sanders reminds him of his political past and temporarily makes him feel that in growing older he has betrayed himself. This is less influential than his relationship to Steffensen, through whom he tries to undo the more essential self-betrayal of his earlier creative ability. The third aspect of what becomes a conflict of generations is sexual, Steffensen's and Jastrau's relationships to different kinds of woman. This only becomes evident later however, because Jastrau himself only grudgingly recognises it.

Part of Jastrau's reaction to Steffensen is to attempt to become youthful again in his mode of life and thinking. His separation from Johanne is a step in this direction because it breaks his alliance with the bourgeoisie. As his brother-in-law leaves after completing the formalities, Steffensen and Anna Marie arrive:

Han stod og stirrede paa de to lurvede skikkelser. Det var jo ungdommen, der kom ham i møde, og han følte,

at han nu var paa lige fod med dem.

(II, 7)

But slowly he changes his views and from wanting to become like Steffensen he begins to despise his immaturity. He is momentarily aware that Steffensen is nothing more than a fanatical, insane student (III, 1), but even then he continues to adopt the same attitudes and uses Steffensen's expression to rid himself of Vuldum's remonstrances about the unpaid bill: "Aa, vil du ikke hønse" (IV, 1 cf. II,4). When Steffensen turns to Catholicism, however, Jastrau realises fully his immaturity and weakness and the realisation frees him definitively from Steffensen's influence. He has to accept that he has grown older:

Nu havde Steffensen et standpunkt. Nu kunne han faa brug for sine knytnæver og slaa. Var det ungdommen? Yderliggaaende, uortodoks, usentimental.

Var det ungdommen?

Og bundforfængelig.

Men Jastrau selv. Nej, han var ikke ungdommen. Han var femogtredive aar, og han var en gammel mand.

(IV, 8)

Jastrau also discovers the vanity and ultimate wrongness of wanting to alter the effects of age in another quarter. For he discovers that Stefani, who had always appeared so threateningly vigorous - Jastrau calls him "den evigt unge H.C.Stefani" - maintains his youth through a form of perversion. Else unwittingly reveals this: "(...) saa tuder han og skriger han og bliver ung igen". Stefani is for Jastrau a representative figure for the preceding generation, whose presence he had continually felt threatening him:

Han var angst for at faa sin anelse bekræftet, og en mørk skikkelse ludede ind over hans liv, et menneske fra kaos, den forrige generation. Bliver vi alle saadan? Aah Gud, og han førte hænderne op til ansigtet og skjulte sig. Er det sjælens forbandede uendelighed?

(IV, 6)

Hearing about Stefani, he feels disgusted with his own attempts at rejuvenation, his attempt to regain "the soul's infinity". When Kjær rejects Jastrau's "youthful" cynicism about Stefani, Kjær's contemporary, and when Jastrau notices the helpless foolishness of Kjær's smile, he realises that his desire to imitate Kjær is wrong (IV, 8). He belongs neither to Steffensen's immature generation, nor to Stefani's and Kjær's, the generation from chaos⁷⁰.

⁷⁰ Jastrau's sense of being caught between two generations, which has specific sexual implications, is a particular formulation of a general feeling, common to Kristensen's age-group. Kristensen remarked on this in a review in 1930:

If we look more closely at the Jastrau-Stefani relationship we shall find that, though not so evident, it is as important as Jastrau's reaction to Steffensen. In fact the two relationships must be ultimately considered together and, in their integration, sexual aspects of the generation conflict become evident. At the root of Jastrau's attitude to Stefani is his insecurity in his past with the newspaper which in turn is caused by his ambiguous attitude to all he considers "bourgeoisie". By criticising older, leading figures of the bourgeoisie, such as Stefani, he appeases his bad conscience but also puts his job in jeopardy and this makes him anxiously insecure. Stefani for example is an indirect threat to Jastrau because he can complain to the editor. Jastrau explains to Vuldum that this has happened before (I, 3). The threat seems to overshadow him almost physically throughout the novel even at the moment of resigning his post (III, 4).

Stefani is particularly threatening because of his apparent energy and youth and Jastrau only frees himself of his presence when he discovers how false the appearance is. What essentially is meant by youth, however, is Stefani's sexual prowess, which is the deep threat to Jastrau, through Steffensen. Steffensen gradually reveals that his father is his rival for Anna Marie (III, 7). Steffensen, who adores his mother and hate his father is forced to compete with him for the love of his mistress. Jastrau's discovery that Stefani needs Else's help to maintain his sexual mobility suggests that, as Steffensen says (III, 7), his father had competed only to spite his son. Through this discovery, Stefani's youthful sexuality is discredited and Jastrau is freed of his fear of the older generation.

Ligesom i Verserne i Hans Hartvig Seedorff-Pedersens "Mod Dagingen" er der noget i Vibes Vers, som kunde tyde paa, at ingen kommer til at beklage Tabet af deres Ungdom mere end Krigstidens hektiske Digtere.

("Verset Nu" *Tilskueren* 1930, I, p. 43)

Aksel Sandemose also expressed a particular characteristic of his generation which Jacob Paludan later took up in his phrase "Aargangen, der maatte snuble i Starten". It is a sense of not properly belonging to one generation or another, of being lost in the middle:

" (...) for ung som man er til at have staaet helt fastgroet og ladet Verdenskrigens Uvejr gaa hen over sig uden i sit Væsen at berøres deraf og for gammel til at have indsuet en ny Verdens Atmosfære med Modersmælken og vokse op i denne Verden uden Forundring. Jorden har aabnet sig under vor Generation."

(*Quod Felix* no. 7 1926)

The importance of the association of youth and sexuality is that there is a similarity between Steffensen's and Jastrau's sexual complexes. Without assuming that they are identical⁷¹, it is clear that Steffensen's situation exhibits the features of an Oedipus complex, and Jastrau also uses this phrase about himself⁷². When Jastrau finally rids himself of Stefani's influence he simultaneously recognises and seems to resolve his own sexual complex⁷³, and the two aspects of the situation seem to be closely though not explicitly linked. The full import of Jastrau's sexual experience with Else is

⁷¹ If we do not simply identify the two and if, in addition, Else is considered to be a substitute figure for Jastrau's mother - both women are, in accordance with traditional symbolism, dark and sensuous, where Johanne is blonde and reticent; both are said to be "proletarian" - then Stefani becomes a father-figure also for Jastrau. The generational and sexual conflict and the rivalry are integrated within the terms of the Oedipus complex, and the liberating influence of Jastrau's discovering Stefani's perversion is deepened by his sexual intercourse with Else. Sexual intercourse at this time is not a chance, guilty encounter, but a decisive guilt-free experience. Jastrau's Oedipus complex is resolved, as is evident from his acknowledging and discussing it with Kryger, and simultaneously the threatening atmosphere of generation-conflict disappears. Although this interpretation is attractively neat and draws themes together, the fact that it relies on two conditions and on the significance of Jastrau's acknowledgement of the complex means that it should be accepted with reservations.

⁷² In a rather light-hearted, almost flippant interview, Tom Kristensen answered the question "Hvad har Kvinden betydet for Dem?" In the following way:

"Tror De, jeg havde oversat D.H.Lawrence's *Sønner og Elskere*, hvis jeg ikke selv havde et Ødipuskompleks (...)"
("Mit Syn paa Kvinden" *Tidens Kvinder* 1941 no. 48 p. 23).

⁷³ The use of the term Oedipus complex requires reference to Freud. It would seem that recognition which is the breaking down of resistance is, according to the principles of Freud's psychoanalytic therapy, synonymous with therapeutic resolution of the complex. That recognition is for Jastrau, despite the hints of Vuldum (II, 1) and Kryger (IV, 4) about the nature of his sexual relationships, in fact a discovery breaking down a certain internal resistance is evident from an earlier passage:

Men Anna Marie. Hun var syg, hun *var* syg. Forelskelse? De blide former. En Kvinde. Noget. der gaar rundt og pusler om en. Noget (...) der var det maaske, - noget, der har angst i blikket, og (...)
Der var det. Hans moder var død tidligt. Urørligt Kvindeideal.
En tanke! Lige ved en tanke, en løsning!
I porten stod den rødhaarede vicevært.
(III, 5)

The apposition of resolution ((løsning) to the clarity of the thought (lige ved en tanke) implies that the eventual clear formulation in the term Oedipus complex is the needed resolution.

symbolised in the fire. Functioning in two ways, the fire integrates two aspects of Jastrau's experience showing that they are ultimately inseparable. The fire destroys the flat, the "ship" of Steffensen's image, and thereby ends Jastrau's plunge into "the soul's infinity". It is clear that Jastrau is conscious of this meaning because he uses a consciously literary phrase, "Alle skibene brænder", to convey the finality of the fire and allude to Steffensen's image. Secondly, the fire symbolises the demanding, destructive and eventually cleansing power of Else's sensuality, linking with the symbolic sensuality of her red kimono:

Det nøgne kvindelegeme svævede skraat opad gennem purpurrøde bølger. Hun rakte armene i vejret. I de dunkle armhuler lurede et grønligt mørke. Sorte Else! Brysterne blev saa brede, med røde reflekser flakkende hen over gullig hud. Kvindelige former. I det samme smøg en lue i vejret derovre, op ad et nyt gardin, en forlangende kvindearm, et krævende kvindelegeme, smidig, lokkende, fortærende, en blussende ild. Kvinde.
(IV, 7)

It is not clear how far the meaning of the symbolic "blazing fire" goes, nor how far Jastrau is fully conscious of the symbol's meaning. We shall see that Jastrau's unconscious experience often makes itself apparent through symbols which are only later interpreted consciously. At a later point, in his conversation with Kryger, Jastrau is able to admit that he has suffered under an Oedipus complex. The fact that he can recognise and admit this might suggest that he has now overcome it and that his sexuality has been brought into normal channels, because of his intercourse with Else. Though this is a possible interpretation there is no explicit evidence, and in the final analysis remains ambiguous.

We have approached the question of Jastrau's sexual experiences through a discussion of the three generations represented in the novel. When we push the discussion further we shall discover that although the incidents of sexual encounter are not in themselves more or less important than other kinds of experience, nonetheless sexuality is an ultimate force in many non-sexual aspects of Jastrau's total experience, determining for example his social and political attitudes.

It is clear from what we can gather about Jastrau's sexual relationship with Johanne that he feels insecure, unsure of himself and his role. He tries to live up to traditional ideas that a man should dominate and conquer woman; his insecurity is evident from the way he observes himself and judges himself inadequate:

De alt for faa nætter. For hun var saa tilbageholdende. Eller han var for lidt dristig. Det var over halvanden maaned siden.

Tilbageholdende. En kvinde, som lukkede øjnene. En kvinde, som i de lyse nætter lod haaret glider over sit ansigt. Altid skjult, naar de var nærmest hinanden. Eller havde han aldrig erobret hende?

(I, 7)

The same attitude re-appears after intercourse with Luise Kryger, (IV, 3) which was no more satisfying. Jastrau conceals his insecurity by adopting the role of Jesus among the prostitutes⁷⁴, an allusion to his review of Stefani's book. In this role he can mix freely with women without feeling required to become sexually engaged. We said above that it is only when he does become sexually engaged⁷⁵, with Else, and discovers the sensuality which Johanne lacks, that his sexual relations become "normal".

The obstacle and at the same time the symbol of his inability to find sexual satisfaction is his fear of syphilis. After his first intercourse with Else, he remembers the incident in the bar and the threat of syphilis is punishment for his "immorality". Syphilis also rules the nature of his relationship with Anna Marie, to whom he feels sexually attracted. It is the reminder of his moral humiliation vis à vis Johanne, the pain of the preventive injection, which stops him accusing her of infidelity. When he begins to realise that Johanne is no different from the other members of the bourgeoisie he despises - "Ogsaa hun var maskeret. Jo, hun var!" (II, 5) - the "immoral" injection becomes a mark of "revolutionary" distinction, separating him from the people he despises:

En lille, smertende erindring gjorde sig atter svagt gældende som en djævel, der hvisker i øret. Men nu betød den ikke en latterlighed mere. Den betød noget revolutionært. Han var af et andet stof end de andre i selskabet.

(II, 5)

This is of course a result of Jastrau's drunken indignation and the implicit comparison with Geberhardt's gesture is a narrative device to ridicule Jastrau. It is however an indication - which might be

⁷⁴ Niels Egebak calls this a compensation for Jastrau's weakness vis à vis woman. He also suggests that Jastrau feels the same tension between the human and divine which he presumes Jesus felt and that this is linked with the central motif of forming order out of chaos. He does not offer any evidence for this latter point however, except his own association of the two things, (cf. *Tom Kristensen* 1971 p. 86 and p. 115).

⁷⁵ Jastrau's review of Stefani's *Hvi haver du forladt mig?* Is clearly an allusion to the contemporary accounts of the historical Jesus, which we discussed earlier.

linked with the doctor's joking reference to the bacteria as "those Bolsheviks" (II, 4) - of the increasingly symbolic importance of syphilis for Jastrau. When he tries to halt his drunken debauch, he finds no oath more fitting or stronger than to swear by his fear of syphilis. It is important that the oath forms itself, which is an indication of its fundamental unconscious significance:

"Saa sandt -," sagde han med natirilig stemme, og i det samme formede edsformularen sig ord for ord.

"Saa sandt jeg frygter syfilis, vil jeg ikke drikke whisky mere."

(II, 6)

Associated, not necessarily justly, with the sensual women around Jastrau - Else and Anna Marie, but not Johanne or Luise Kryger - syphilis becomes a consciously acknowledged symbol, which he eventually casts off with other symbolism: "spøgeri alt sammen!" (IV, 6).

In order to understand the meaning of the symbol, we must return to the moment when Jastrau almost recognises his Oedipus complex. Anna Marie is "untouchable" because she is syphilitic:

De blide former. En kvinde. Noget, der gaar rundt og pusler om en. Noget (...) dér var det maaske, - noget, der har angst i blikket, og (...)

Noget, der var urørligt.

Dér var det. Hans moder var død tidligt. Urørligt kvindeideal.

(III, 5)

The word "untouchable" is applied to two concepts: syphilis and mother-worship. It is evident that Jastrau's fear of syphilis conceals his Oedipus complex from himself, his fear of woman's sensuality and his preference for woman as a protective figure, who looks after him like a child ("pusler om en"). He tries to establish exactly this kind of relationship with Johanne, whose sympathy he seeks by "playing Oluf" and hiding in her lap.

It is when Jastrau penetrates beyond the symbolism, and overcomes this fear, that he discovers the power of sexuality over other aspects of his life so when he discovers that Else is not syphilitic, that Vuldum was only indulging in his personal hate of Else by suggesting she had syphilis, Jastrau "realises" that sensuality is not wrong. He overcomes his fear of syphilis and sexual intercourse provides, afterwards, "et duftende, tæt mørke omkring sig (...) en animalsk lunhed i nærheden, et nøgent legeme, der aandede" (IV, 7). This break with symbolism is a step nearer full recognition and anticipates the moment when Jastrau admits his former sexual confusion, his Oedipus complex. This is analogous to and integrated with other aspects of his return to "reality" because

simultaneously he sees how his "mother-worship" influenced his political views. The recognition is clear from the ironic tone of the following speech, in which he projects on to the future what happened in the past:

"En mand sættes til at studere nationaløkonomi (...) hans moder er død, da hun er tyve (...) Han har altsaa ikke kendt hende (...) Men han forguder hende (...) Og han ved om hende, at hun var proletarkvinde (...) i dette ords sande og mest fortvivlende betydning." Jastraus stemme var stivnet i dirrende heftighed og alvor. Den drilagtige gnist var hvirvlet bort, og blikket som hypnotiseret af en fjern brand (...) "Nu er nationaløkonomi saa objektivt, som noget kan være. Ikke? Tal og realiteter. Eller tager jeg fejl? Er den ikke mere objektiv end lyrik? Men jeg spørger dig - " og Jastrau lo højt, "bliver en saadan mand konservativ eller kommunist?"

(We notice that the significance of the fire is indirectly recalled by the simile describing Jastrau's eyes.) Jastrau is here suggesting to Kryger that the same thing may happen to him in Berlin as happened in his youth. We gather that as long as he was unmarried he was attracted to communism as much for emotional, sexual reasons - because his mother was "proletarian" - as for intellectual, rational ones. The only illustration we have of Jastrau's revolutionary poetry, the poem for which he is best known, shows how the sexual and political are linked. It is an appeal to the revolutionary mother-figure. Once he married however, his politics changed, he became "bourgeois" precisely because the new object of his sexuality, Johanne, represents in his eyes the "bourgeoisie". Krog's attempt to flatter Johanne indicated the strength and kind of her influence over Jastrau, for the words "sørøver" and "hjemmemenneske" and "gamle revolutionære idiot" allude to Jastrau's political change:

"Saa lykkedes det endelig at rive ham løs fra hjemmets arne. Men med Dem som frue, ikke sandt, saa bliver selv en sørøver et hjemmemenneske. Ja, hvem skulle have troet det om dig, gamle revolutionære idiot."
(II, 4)

Part of the failure of his marriage, however, his sexual difficulties with Johanne, is reflected in his feeling of unease about his social and political position. Johanne's influence is not entirely successful; their sexual relations are not "normal" and successful enough. In the epilogue, however, after the apparent success of his relationship with Else, Jastrau findings of unconsciously whistling the Internationale:

Men hvad betød nu det? Var det andet end en sentimental tone fra underbevidstheden? Stemnings-

kommunisme? Han skubbede sig irriteret til rette i stolen. Stemninger endte altid med knuste ruder – til fire kroner.

What is new here is that, though the power of the subconscious again makes itself felt, he is now able to recognise and suppress it. We may, however, wonder how long his analytic clarity will last, even if he manages to "escape" his emotional confusion by leaving for Berlin. What Jastrau has "discovered" is that the "reality" to which he returns cannot be separated from the "reality" of the soul, but symptomatically the either/or choice we saw in the other novels is again dominant here. Jastrau feels obliged to choose either the "inner" or the "outer" world; there is no fusion for him, despite the novel's "discovery". Because he "refuses" to acknowledge the discovery, the novel and the reader doubt the success of his escape to Berlin.

The workings of "the soul"

We have several times mentioned symbols in *Hærværk* and their meaning and nature for Jastrau⁷⁶. It is worthwhile taking the discussion further with particular reference to the way Jastrau experiences the world of "the soul". This is almost certainly something which Kristensen has transposed directly from his own experience, which he once described in an interview:

"(...) nu betyder det ydre, Huse, Gade, og Træer saa forfærdelig meget for mig og i mine melankolske Perioder kommer de til at staa som en Art Skrifttegn eller Symboler og denne Gang er det altsaa Domkirken i Roskilde og Gaderne deromkring, der er en, som hedder Bonde-Tinget, den udtrykker noget jeg ikke kan forklare ad fornuftig Vej."

("Hvert femte Aar dukker jeg ned i en Bølgedal" B.T. 22 June 1939)

Jastrau is aware that his plunge into the depths of the soul presupposes a dualistic separation of mind and body. To achieve separation, he uses drink and sometimes jazz and dance; his nickname, "Jazz", can be linked with his unsuccessful concentration on one element of dualism:

Jastrau derimod stod op og improviserede danse. De blev aldrig til virkelighed (...) I saadanne øjeblikke kunne han tro paa en let og dansende sjæl i en plump

⁷⁶ Symbolism in *Hærværk* has been discussed by Aage Jørgensen, who has pointed out how symbols are created in Jastrau's conscious and unconscious, ("Tom Kristensens roman *Hærværk*" *Danske Studier* 57 1962 p.48).

og ubehandlig krop, og saa følte han fortvivlelse og dualisme, der skulle overdøves, døves, beruses.

(III, 1)

At the end he recognises the dullness, aimlessness of his attempts. The result would be the triviality and disorder, he glimpses in his own flat from Else's window:

Saadan ville livet tage sig ud, hvis sjælen engang kunne frigøre sig fra kroppen, saa uordentligt, saa afstumpet i sine formaal.

(IV, 6)

What we want to examine is what happens before this moment of recognition. One thing we shall again find is the predominance of the sexual and the instinctive which are sometimes realised in particular actions, but often suppressed into the symbolic⁷⁷.

There is, in *Hærværk*, a certain amount of traditional literary symbolism independent of Jastrau's consciousness, but forming a network of associations around his sexual progress. Johanne, blond, blue-eyed and matronly contrasts with Else, the dark, sensuous prostitute. Luise Kryger and Anna Marie fall between these extremes. When they drive out into the country, Johanne is wearing blue and, when Oluf begins picking anemones, Jastrau associates her with something unattainable, a blue anemone, which is clearly linked to "die blaue Blume" of Romanticism. The association strikes him more strongly when he repeats the drive with Kjær, (IV, 2). Else, on the other hand, wears black or a red kimono, and is thus associated with the fire and some elemental sexual experience. The symbolic significance of the fire itself, however, which raises sexual intercourse with Else to something more than a mere incident, depends on Jastrau's consciousness. Although the symbolic meaning is not immediately available to him in an explicit form, it starts as an artefact of his unconscious like a number of other symbols. These symbols which thus contrast with the independent, traditional ones, can be usefully divided into two categories.

First, there are symbols which help Jastrau to understand what is happening to him. The fish he sees in the Tivoli aquarium helps him to explain to himself what he is searching for, and the power of its influence. The fish's meaning is not just Jastrau's Jesus-complex - as he explains to Luise Kryger (IV, 1) - for it covers the unfathomable nature of the soul, the unconscious and the totality of Jastrau's inner, subjective experience. Other examples are the telephone, the Negro fetish, the "bourgeois" furniture, Oluf's

⁷⁷ The importance of Freudianism is undeniable here. Nonetheless, although Kristensen may well have been helped by Freud's work to understand the workings of symbols, it is clear enough that he had felt the power of symbols in a very personal way.

shrove-tide birch. Their meaning is not always precise, or as Kristensen said they express something which cannot be explained rationally. Their function is to fix and externalise vaguely felt and disturbing emotional experience:

Nej, det maatte blive staaende derhenne i krogen
endnu, det fastelavnsris, saa havde han i hvert fald den
sorg anbragt, henne i krogen, en fast og spraglet ting.
En sorg. Et fastelavnsris.
(III, 6)

The second category of symbols have the opposite function: they obscure from Jastrau the true explanation of his experience. These are the symbols which contain his sexual difficulties in a suppressed form. The curtain, which he feels hides something, his fear of syphilis, the chance glimpse of a film title, are all diversions from the underlying truth. The narrative which reveals how such symbols are formed is written from a position of greater awareness than Jastrau has. For example, the description of the growing significance of the curtains is given from outside Jastrau's consciousness, "uden at han anede det":

Stille lagde han kniv og gaffel fra sig og stirrede, stirrede
paa genboens hvide fortræksgardiner. De blev som
flammer i dagslys, og uden at han anede det, luede de i
hans tanker. De blev hans tanker.
(II, 4)

It seems to Jastrau that these things have their own symbolic value, but it is made clear to the reader that their meaning is dependent on what Jastrau interprets into them. It is thus an effort and change of consciousness which he makes to rid himself eventually of the symbols, to penetrate to a clear understanding of what they have obscured, (IV, 6).

An important group of these symbols arising from the unconscious are best described as expressing the instinctive in Jastrau. By the instinctive we mean something which includes the sexual and other forces in Jastrau's character: his fear (angst) of existing within an infinite emptiness, his love for Oluf, and other forces less distinct. Something of this is expressed in occasional contrasts of city and country, civilisation and nature.

Jastrau first feels the attraction of nature in the breath of spring air passing through the broken pane in the stairway. This romanticised view of nature is less powerful than a more elemental experience. In fact he rejects the usual conceptions of the beauty of Spring when he goes out driving with Johanne – "Hvorfor skulle foraaret just betyde renhed? En fugtig væg, en foraarsskov" – and during the repeat of this excursion, Kjær's drunken fear that he has been

led into a church is a mockery of the romantic notion of religious awe of the forest. The elementally natural on the contrary is contained in the inarticulate value of the Negro fetish, in the childish behaviour of Oluf, in Jastrau's longing for him, in the animal gestures of Jastrau and Steffensen as they haunt the Catholic church, and in Else's animal warmth lying beside Jastrau in bed. The instinctive is released by jazz and dance:

Han følte sig som en sindssyg, der ubehersket giver sig hen i sine improviserede bevægelser, kantede og meningsløse. Og saa lød en saxofon, dyb og klagende, den udløste al det hæmmede. Og Jastrau skreg. Skriget gav ekko. Han standsede overrasket.
(II, 7)

It is particularly present in the animal released in Steffensen during the fight with Jastrau:

Steffensen havde bidt sig fast.
Vild af angst skubbede Jastrau til det mørke hoved dernede og skreg og skreg og sparkede med benene.
Dyr uden skikkelse! Dyriskheden! Mørket med tænder.
(III, 8)

The surprise and fear which Jastrau feels on both these occasions is evidence that he continually observes himself from a "normal" viewpoint; in the first passage he sees himself as "abnormal", as insane. Kryger also disapproves of him because he is "more animal than human" (IV, 8). As Jastrau gradually returns to normal reality he becomes even more disgusted and rejects his own animal self:

De fniste og lo endnu, de tre hærgede dyreansigter, (...)
Og der var intet spejl, saa han kunne ikke se sig selv.
Det fjerde dyreansigt.
(IV, 5)

This is part of his rejection or what he had learnt about "the soul", but the reader may doubt how successful his repression of the animal will be, especially in view of the narrator's comments in the epilogue:

"I de to kurvestole ved hotelindgangen sad Jastrau og den evige Kjær (...)
Med de rødsprængte, bulne hoveder lignede de to dekorative dyr."

In a moment of deep apathy, just before the sound of the ambulance calls him back to the "real" world, Jastrau wryly remarks that the only thing of interest is the soul, and its existence cannot be established, (IV, 6). He is right that he has found no unitary whole to fill the emptiness of space, as he had hoped, but he is wrong to ignore what he *has* discovered. He has discovered how the soul functions, how the conscious and the unconscious work

together. It strikes him as he remembers how he lay in prison and raved about Jesus and the prostitutes:

Men hvorfor var Jesus begyndt at spørge i hans tanker?
Var det besøget i Stenosgade? (...) Nej! Og atter nej! Og
dog maaske. Laa den sorte pater som en skygge ind
over hans tanker? Underligt, som alt satte sig fast i
sjælen, uden at man bemærkede det. Intet glemtes,
intet. Men Peter Boyesen hilser
(II, 4)

Nothing is lost, everything returns to the kind of association which here recalls the greeting written on the prison wall. Jastrau becomes aware of this and it is moreover also reflected in the detail of the text. He needs the associations in repetitions of his personal experience, which in turn makes him feel at close quarters the vastness of an infinite, eternal and empty universe, and which brings him to despair. We have thus returned to the theme of Nietzschean recurrence from a different angle (cf. above p. 124 ff). The repetitious associations in "the soul" thus drive him back to external "reality", but *Hærværk* contains this important recognition of the soul's functioning through associations and of its deepest level of the instinctive⁷⁸.

The author

We have occasionally referred to the difference between the author and Jastrau, despite the obvious first-person dimension of Jastrau's character and the technique which borders on first-person stream of consciousness. We shall see in the following that the presence of an author-narrator is not just a question of keeping the narrative going when Jastrau is no longer able, but is more interestingly the

⁷⁸ In 1929, Kristensen described the soul in a similar way:

Spørsmaalet bliver saa, om de yngste vil opfatte "Sjæl" som noget "skønt" og velklingende og falde i Armene paa Bagstræbet, eller om de vil nærme sig den reelle Sjæl, Tanken i Hjærnen, som skaber fra Billede til Billede, Association til Association, og føler Logik som en knirkende Mekanik.

("Et lige saa aabent Svar" *Tilskueren* 1929 II, p.142)

In 1931, he described Joyce's technique in terms which indicate that he had used it himself, thus defining what he understood by "soul":

En stor Del af det, vi forvirret kalder "Sjæl", er udtalte Ord, rent legemlige, indre Reaktioner og den tavse Mumlen, som ledsager disse Reaktioner og higer imod at blive udtrykt. Og ud fra denne Opfattelse er den "strømmende Bevidstheds-Teknik" blevet til. Man prøver paa at stenografe Associationerne ned.

("James Joyce" *Politiken* 15 & 16 October 1931)

question of a definite authorial attitude, which ends in an "Epilog" and which was anticipated in the motto⁷⁹.

One critic has shown that a narrator helps the reader to follow the passage of time and identify characters, when he needs to go beyond Jastrau's immediate consciousness. In doing so, the narrator's style is very similar to Jastrau's, so that the reader has the impression that he is nonetheless seeing things from Jastrau's viewpoint. More importantly, the narrator keeps things going when Jastrau is no longer conscious; for example when he falls into Luise Kryger's doorway, unconscious, we still see the effect on her. The narrator also reveals something more useful when he describes what is available neither to Jastrau nor to an ordinary observer: the workings of Jastrau's unconscious. For example, he describes how a glimpse of the removal man sitting in a rococo chair fixes itself in Jastrau's memory without his being aware of it. He also describes how the site of the familiar tree penetrates into the unconscious, as a part of Jastrau's instinct for the natural in the midst of the city:

Der stod et grønt træ i dette dybe hul af en gade, med rødderne klemmt mellem brosten, og med støjende graa spurve i den grønne krone. Det havde han ellers altid et vemodigt smil tilovers for; men i dag strejfede det kun hans underbevidsthed som et grønt blink nede i grumset vand.

(III, 1)

And on a third occasion, the narrator equates the instinctive with the subconscious when he describes Jastrau's attempt to hide from the (symbolic) fire in the (equally symbolic) curtains:

Og det var rent instinktmæssigt, det var ubevidst, at han greb efter fortræksgardinet og blufærdigt skjulte sin nøgenhed i det, som om flammerne var nysgerrige.

(IV, 7)

If we turn from the narrator to the author's structural organisation of the novel, we find three methods of criticising Jastrau. First, Jastrau's "philosophical game" in drinking, as he calls it (IV, 4), is parodied through other less philosophical drunkards. The journalist, Eriksen's, unpretentious drunken isolation and despair foreshadows Jastrau's recognition of the wreck of his flat and the aimlessness of his soul-searching. Though Jastrau does not recognise the warning at the time, the author provides the reader with an opportunity to judge the individualism of drunkenness:

⁷⁹ We owe the idea of linking discussions of epilogue and motto to Mogens Bjerring Hansen's *Person og Vision*, 1972:

Handlingen er således omkredset af kommentarer, der ligger på et andet niveau.

Jastrau gik og lukkede efter sig ind til Eriksen. Men selv gennem døren trængte den hule hoste, lyden af et menneske, overladt til sig selv.

(II, 2)

Kjær is another, more significant figure of parody who is directly compared with Jastrau by Luise Kryger; she fears that Jastrau will end like Kjær (III, 5). Kjær's vision of a white mouse reduces the seriousness of Jastrau's visions, and his purpose, to become "a quiet drunkard" (IV, 2) is a mockery of Jastrau's "philosophical aim". Jastrau himself eventually begins to realise this, but in another situation the author surpasses Jastrau's consciousness and mocks the very essence of his belief that the infinity of the soul can fill the emptiness of an infinite universe. There are two similar situations. In the first, Jastrau goes out into the hotel yard, where he hears the instinctive and natural sound of jazz cast into the sky:

Betonen og de høje gaardfacader forstærkede lyden, og som gennem et valdhorn sendtes den forvirrede støj op gennem gaardens skakt, op mod foraarsaftenens mørke himmel og de smaa stjerner. Et stort nu var det. En udvidelse af sjælen.

(I, 6)

Kjær is described in the same situation:

Og nu saa Jastrau, at den evige Kjær derude lagde nakken langt tilbage, som om han desperat kiggede op mod den lille firkant af blaa himmel, og gjorde nogle hop paa det ene ben.

(III, 4)

But Kjær's despair is caused by nothing more than an aching tooth!

A second method of authorial criticism is to reveal how Jastrau appears to other people. In this way the reader is wrenched out of Jastrau's subjective world and shown the external, "real" view. We see him through the eyes of the women he betrays: Johanne at the meal with Steffensen and Sanders, (I, 2); Anna Marie at the moment when Jastrau suggests he and Steffensen should gamble for her (III, 7); Luise Kryger when he refuses to become entangled in a serious relationship, (IV, 3)⁸⁰. We are also told how animal-like he looks in Kryger's eyes (IV, 8).

The third method is to use a mirror to show Jastrau's external appearance, while maintaining his viewpoint⁸¹, for example, after his break with Johanne and a subsequent night of drinking:

⁸⁰ This point is discussed by Hanne Marie Svendsen (cf. note 63)

⁸¹ Jørgensen suggests that this is a means of providing ordinary description without breaking with the convention of portraying everything from Jastrau's point of view (cf. note 76)

Henne i det lille spejl over servanten fik han undersøgt sit ansigt. Der var store, skraa furer under øjnene, kinderne var oppustede. Aah, altid dette. Ecce Homo. Dette – dette forbryderansigt!
(II, 6)

In each case, Jastrau is dismayed and disgusted with himself, and he often avoids using a mirror - for example after the fight with Steffensen, (IV, 1). His self-criticism in front of the mirror is part of his characteristic self-observation and is based on normal criteria. He thus contradicts his intention to abandon the superficial, false world of social judgements.

The narrative and structural devices which surpass Jastrau's consciousness and criticise him are in effect a continuation of his self-observation. They form the frame of normal, "real" values around Jastrau's decadence which are shared by author and reader at a superior level. For example, in revealing his physical appearance, the mirror which is a traditional revealer of truth, shows the "real" decadence of Jastrau's philosophical search into the soul. Thus from the beginning the author encourages the reader to maintain his normal judgements by developing a deep trait of Jastrau's character. Jastrau's soul-seeking is condemned from the beginning and Jastrau himself, who is essentially weak and insecure in his political and social position, is reduced even further by the ironic understanding between author and reader. We are given the impression that Jastrau is deceiving himself almost consciously.

When we come to the last chapter, which the author has clearly separated from the others by calling it an epilogue, we are aware that he consciously dissociates himself from Jastrau. We feel that he has used Jastrau to be rid of experience he felt critical towards from the beginning and now abandons him totally⁸². (We saw the same

⁸² Tom Kristensen describes something of what happened in an interview in 1960:

Man skriver for at gøre sig fri af noget og blive det kvit. Derfor skrev jeg *Hærværk* og satte mit eget lidt opdunstede og noget værkende hoved paa den kendte kritiker og romanfigur Ole Jastrau, stakkels mand, han har maattet bære paa noget. Jeg føler med ham, men er ham ogsaa taknemmelig.

("En ung person har øvet hærværk" *Politiken* 3 April 1960)

Both Niels Egebak and Mogens Bjerring Hansen agree in general with our view that the author abandons Jastrau. Hansen is more convincing in his formulation because less categorical and provides more careful evidence. Egebak uses the terms "satire" and "caricature" which are too rough, and is more concerned to find quotations to fit his emphasis on Nietzschean

treatment of Pram in the epilogue to *Livets Arabesk* and a similar change of tone in the final chapter of *En Anden*.) For immediately after Jastrau's apparently decisive experience freeing him of his hallucinations, we are shown in the first lines of the epilogue that the only progress he has made in fact has been a move from inside to outside the bar where he still very much resembles Kjær and is still governed by the animal and instinctive. Furthermore, author and Jastrau realise the continuing power of the subconscious, the tendency to fall into emotional rather than rational politics. Though Jastrau suppresses it, the author shows his doubts about the efficacy of suppression by reference to Jastrau's continuing animal-like nature. Finally, through the symbolic value of the oval shape on the banknote, and Jastrau's admission that he has to beg from others, that he is still economically dependent on the bourgeoisie we are shown that there is no escape from the life, society and reality which Jastrau had tried to spurn. In taking this standpoint, the author shows that he accepts Jastrau's automatic association of the financial necessity of being part of social reality with the notion of accepting "bourgeois" life and values. The author accepts the association which is not absolutely necessary: to opt for "reality", for economic and existential security, is not necessarily to adopt "bourgeois" life and values. On the other hand, the author does not completely condemn Jastrau; he still has a doubtful chance in Berlin. He has after all that much sympathy for him, for he cannot deny the insights into "the soul" which Jastrau has given, nor does he propose any well-defined alternative moral position from which to condemn. In the final analysis he has, in *Hærværk*, reasserted traditional morality without being positive about what it is. He is only positive in what he warns against in well-used, traditional terms:

FRYGT SJÆLEN OG DYRK DEN IKKE
FOR DEN LIGNER EN LAST⁸³

categories in Kristensen's work. (Cf. Egebak *Tom Kristensen* p.144f and Hansen *Person og Vision* p.71f)

⁸³ Tom Kristensen has explained the motto in the following way:

Det er et farvel til al slags introversion. Jeg havde håbet at kunne blive helt extrovert. Det er i øvrigt bygget over Kongfutse: Frygt guderne, men hold dig fjernt fra dem.

("Kunsten udvider det indre rum" *Hjørring Seminarium Årsskrift* 1966)

This is a different formulation of the basic opposition of "soul" and "reality", suggesting that he hoped to ignore the subconscious, the sexual and instinctive, but simultaneously implying that the hope was disappointed.

Functions of the text

Significances and functions

In relating the general results of our interpretation to the preceding account of the periods of thought, there is one most important point to be made and a general comment. In general it is clear enough that Kristensen not only used contemporary debate as material but also provided a contribution to one aspect of the debate. For although the predominance of academics produced a large degree of concern about the intellectual's position the debate did at least profess to cover the interests of all parts of society. It is also evident that *Hærværk* is part of a general development in Kristensen's thought and life, even if many people were surprised by the novel at the moment of publication. The development was a personal necessity whose direction was in part decided and in part merely encouraged by the tone and argumentation between distinctive contemporary groups.

The important point to be made is a symptom of this interplay between personal development and contemporary arguments. It is that there is both an apparent and a real significance. By this we mean that the novel can be categorised and put in a direct relationship to the polarised argumentation of contemporary debate, which in fact means simplification and misinterpretation, or it can be accepted for what it is and related more indirectly to the debate. In the first case we are again approaching from a different direction the relationship of author and Jastrau and the question of alignment. We remarked in our interpretation how easy it was for Hans Kirk to see *Hærværk* as a socialist novel and for Kristensen himself to swing from his former sceptical individualism into Marxism (cf. p.15). This is a consequence of accepting exclusively the opposition individualism-socialism. By criticising Jastrau and his world, Kristensen *apparently* automatically aligned himself and his novel with the left-wing. The text itself encourages this simplification by weaving the opposition into the meaning by anticipating its own apparent significance⁸⁴.

⁸⁴ Ernst Frandsen, who based his book on the thesis that the twenties saw the end of "individualism" and the beginning of "anti-individualism", saw that "rational collectivism" did not appeal to Kristensen, who "forlangte mystisk befrielse for selvet i fællesfølelsen". He bases his account mainly on *Livets Arabesk* and has little to say about *Hærværk*, where his interpretation of "religion" and "mysticism" would be less apt; even in *Livets Arabesk* it tends to limp, and does not account properly for the significance of Johannes.

(cf. *Årgangen, der måtte snuble i starten* 1965 chap IV, 2 & 8)

Yet the text also used other concepts and subsumes this simple opposition under a greater complexity. It is the relationship of this complexity to the contextual opposition which is the real significance. The complexity is caused by the introduction of a third element, the sense of responsibility which is not frozen into a moral code (cf. p 123). The author's ironic sensitivity refuses systematic, dogmatic morality and political conviction. *Hærværk* exposes Catholicism, communism and bourgeois society; it reveals nonetheless the writer's essential morality, and a sense of human responsibility (and his deeper alignment with the bourgeois economic world). The novel's real significance lies in its opposing this humanist morality to the slick formulæ of self-satisfied assertions of its contemporaries. Unfortunately Kristensen himself soon forgot this in his Marxist-crisis and may not even in the act of writing have been fully aware of where his ironic sensitivity was leading him⁸⁵.

In a sense, the simplification which the novel was open to even as we suspect on the part of its writer, was necessary if it was to fulfil its function for Kristensen completely. For *Hærværk* obviously helps him to work out and dismiss the experience of his crisis, but it also helps him to react to pressure and align himself unequivocally in the debate. It is easier for us now to appreciate the significance of the author's irony, but in the heat of the day, it tended to be lost from sight. Consequently the novel functions as a confession of failure, of having made the wrong choice and as a statement of a new allegiance. Ultimately, after the allegiance was again broken, the novel had helped Kristensen to a reorientation of the artist in him towards the priority of the material and inter-individual world, away from his exclusive sceptical interest in the existential problems of

⁸⁵ Two interviews Kristensen gave at the time indicate how, already at the moment of writing and publishing, he tended to accept the current simplified opposition. In "Gennem Detentionslokalet" (*Politiken* 17 November 1929), he identifies with Kirk and Gelsted, who are openly left-wing representatives. In an interview which Harald Bergstedt sprinkled with explanatory comments, Kristensen is said to have abandoned bourgeois individualism. Accepting this, he says that he now trusts in typical lower class movements and their "solidarity", which is clearly a communist-inspired catchword, ("Da Tom løb linen ud" *Social-Demokraten* 30 November 1930). In a third interview, however, he explained that the novel's main purpose was to warn against alcoholism ("Sold g'ir Syn" *B.T.* 29 November 1930), but we should rather accept what he said in 1943 about this:

Hærværk handlede jo i Virkeligheden om andet end om Spiritus, den handlede om den Kamp for at skabe en Livs-Anskuelse, at opleve Livet ud over den, skal vi kalde det den overfladiske Vanemæssighed (...)
("Det religiøse i mig har jeg bøjet mig for" *Berlingske Aftenavis* 31 July 1943)

his particular life. At a deeper level, of course, it functioned for both the writer and reader as a means of exploring beneath the surface of daily, social life and discovering something which gives a new tone to such life, to which both are forced eventually to return⁸⁶.

What other functions did *Hærværk* have for its reader? Kristensen repeatedly insisted that it was not a "Tendensroman", but though it ought to warn people against alcoholism, for example, it was not a convert's confessions. On the other hand, the novel begins with a warning moralising motto, and he certainly hoped that his work would have something more than an aesthetic effect on its public. It was, he hoped, an exposure of the bourgeois and aesthete Copenhagen of the twenties; that is, more than a simple description. He is clearly following the direction indicated especially by Hans Kirk in *Kritisk Revy*, even though he refuses the word "Tendens" which Kirk had tried to reinstate:

"Jeg kan ikke lide det Ord. Tendens? Nej, jeg synes meget bedre om Poul Henningsens Retning. Man kan vel udforme sit Stof anskueligt uden at prædike, mon ikke?"
("Marxisme -- ! En Samtale med Tom Kristensen."
Ekstrabladet 4 April 1931)

And something similar appears in a discussion of *Hærværk* itself:

".. al Tendens gør Kunsten flad, medens Skikkelserne i en Bog med retning *baade* kan faa Lov at leve for

⁸⁶ Sven Møller Kristensen has drawn attention to a passage from Tom Kristensen's review of Liam O'Flaherty's *Shame the Devil*, and suggests that this is a very apt characterisation of Kristensen himself. He is talking of the war generation's need for confession:

... i Haab om, at en desperate Selvudlevering maaske dog kunde afsløre Bunden. Har der nemlig igennem de sidste tyve Aar ikke været andet Synspunkt at finde, har der altid været den Udvej at sætte sit eget Jeg ind paa de voldsomme Oplevelser, at konfrontere sig med Livet, hvor det ytrede sig hæftigst, og at konstatere Reaktionen i dette eget Jeg, som om det var den eneste sikre Maaler, der gaves. Og en Konstatation af disse Reaktionen maa nødvendigvis blive Bekendelse, ikke altid Udtryk for Ruelse, lige saa ofte Udtryk for et hasaderet Forsøg paa at være ærlig.
("Hold Djævelen for Nar" *Politiken* 30 June 1934)

Although this is indeed a very accurate and closely felt self-characterisation, it is not a complete account of *Hærværk* and its function. It helps us to understand what happens "before" the act of writing, but it lacks an account of that ironic self-estrangement which gives *Hærværk* its special tone, and which is a sign of recognition of what Kristensen calls "danger" in the same article: "En urolig trang til Omvendelser og ekstreme Standpunkter".

Retningens – Tendensens – Skyld og for deres egen
Skyld, det er *det*, der er tilbage af *mig*, af *Artisten* (...)"
("Sold gi'r Syn" *B.T.* 29 November 1930)

A glance through the reviews in 1930 and 1931 will soon show however that though *Hærværk* may have succeeded in disgusting people with alcoholism, it did not on the whole fulfil its wider functions. There were two difficulties which the passage of time has removed. First, there was the novelty of the technique, the borrowings from Joyce⁸⁷, which even the warning in the novel itself - Jastrau lends *Ulysses* to Luise Kryger and warns her how difficult it is - could not soften. All the contemporary reader could see was a chaos of confessions without direction or purpose and his reaction was to dismiss the novel as "second-class" (Henning Kehler) or a "disappointment" (Hans Brix), or to fasten on to the portrait of contemporary figures. For this was the second difficulty, at least for the public which was best placed to understand the presuppositions to the novel, namely that they "recognised" certain people from *Politiken* and other intellectual circles. This led to more concentration on spotting the originals and discussing the merits of using living models than was good for the novel itself. The question of the "roman à clef" can be reduced to the fact that this or any novel only functions as such for the few people involved or closely linked with the models. The only important model, who is immediately identifiable, is the author, and we need not worry about the "accuracy" or otherwise of other characters. Unfortunately, not even the passage of time has yet adequately dismissed this misleading question. It made the novel appear too personal, too idiosyncratic and hid its social, psychological and aesthetic implications.

Critical analysis of the author's conceptual system

We return to the world of the novel to make our final point about the implications of its conceptual, semantic system. We believe that in adopting the outlook which this system reveals, Kristensen cut himself off from genuine concern with "the proletariat", and the political interests linked to them, and also suffocated his ability for creative writing, at least of the kind of literature he had written until the end of *Hærværk*. Though subsequent collections of poetry seem to contradict this, the scarcity of really new work is good evidence that he broke through the suffocation only rarely.

⁸⁷ Kristensen says he used *Ulysses* as an armoury from which he borrowed technical weapons, ("Derfor skrev jeg *Hærværk*" *B.T.* 7 November 1964)

For Jastrau, we said, the question of political allegiance, with the "proletariat" or with the "bourgeoisie", is mixed up with his sexual complex. When the latter is resolved, his political dilemma is also resolved - he rejects "emotional communism" - but obviously on false, non-political grounds. The resolution is reinforced by Jastrau's recognition and acceptance of the power of money, of his economic dependence, of "reality". Of course, our insistence on distinguishing the author from Jastrau means that at a superior level the author may see through the false, "sexual" resolution of the political dilemma. On the other hand, we found no denial on the part of the author of the validity of the "reality" which Jastrau eventually finds. The author accepts the basic semantic oppositions which direct Jastrau's progress. We have also insisted on this throughout. Let us now look at the political implications of the oppositions.

We find that on the one hand we have the poet - the vagabond or the "freebooter", as Kristensen calls him elsewhere - and the proletariat with its revolutionaries while on the other hand there is the "bourgeoisie" associated with economic and financial security for its supporters. This opposition means that only as long as the poet remains a vagabond, is essentially insecure with respect to society, can he be in any way associated with proletarian politics - as Steffensen helps Sanders. The poet who wants security, financial and existential, automatically finds himself supporting the bourgeoisie - even when he believes he is protected by his "apolitical" aestheticism. When Jastrau and his author established that "reality" means accepting the need for security and therefore for financial dependence - as well as a humanist morality - the choice is automatically made, the "bourgeois" alternative must be accepted. The formulation of the oppositions, therefore, has predetermined the result; it has suppressed the possibility of accepting security in "reality" and simultaneously supporting proletarian politics. It has also suppressed the possibility of accepting security and continuing to write poetry; the vagabond cannot retain his poetic independence if he accepts economic dependence. Significantly, much of Kristensen's poetry after *Hærværk* was *Digte i Døgnnet*, that is poetry which is directly linked to the business of maintaining security, poetry which is immediately paid for.

Jastrau despises Else's attempts to imitate the styles and tastes of the bourgeoisie because they remind him of his own rococo ambitions. He considers that the "proletariat" thus betrays itself by accepting the dictates of the "bourgeoisie" - we saw the same view in *Livets Arabesk*. What he is in fact rejecting is his own highly individualist success in "freebooting" himself upwards in society, by seizing the chances which his poetic, intellectual and sexual abilities

had given him - to become an important member of the newspaper to marry Johanne. This leads us to another dilemma in the conceptual system of *Hærværk*. The vagabond poet is aligned with the "proletariat", but in fact his individualist, independent nature, which is the foundation of his poetic ability, precludes him from the true alliance with proletarian politics. Sanders says that Steffensen is no revolutionary. It is that same individualism which led Jastrau out of his proletarian background. So, in fact, whichever way Jastrau were to choose, if the choice were really an open one, his alliance with the left wing would never be deeper than his sexually inspired "emotional communism", his devotion to his mother transferred to politics. Therefore, because in all this the author accepts the values which Jastrau discovers, we can see that his political and social sympathies are essentially with what he calls the "bourgeoisie" and their mode of living, despite his attempts to deny this⁸⁸.

We have argued that in the course of the novel such a process of simplification takes place that Jastrau's experiences and attitudes are reduced to the terms of the current subjectivity/objectivity opposition. This takes place in spite of conceptual subtleties we have discovered and of which we presume the author remains in the final analysis unaware. The simplification helps the author to establish himself politically vis à vis his contemporaries' expectations and presuppositions, for he has channelled and produced his experience to fit the pre-existing categories. We assume that the simplification had precisely this purpose of establishing the author's political allegiance unequivocally.

If we now consider the process of simplification in the light of communication analysis, we can see in it the attempt of the author to make his message conform with the modes of thought and the presuppositions of his audience and their language. Since the subjectivity/objectivity opposition is the currency of the day, he

⁸⁸ These attempts, as we have seen, were founded on the "false" synonym of humanism with socialism. The dilemma of reconciling the individualism of the "freebooter" - and individualism Kristensen suggested was in the hearts of the lowest placed members of society - with "lower class movements" runs through the interview Kristensen had with Harald Bergstedt. In fact, by suggesting there that he must return to the milieu from which he came, he abandoned the concept of the freebooter and the possibility of reconciliation, ("Da Tom løb linen ud" *Social-Demokraten* 30 November 1930). Similarly in another interview soon after, under the influence of Russian theories about the poet, he denies that he is any different from ordinary people, that he is "gifted" - the freebooter and his individual ability is totally abandoned, ("Marxisme --! En Samtale med Tom Kristensen" *Ekstrabladet* 4 April 1931)

formulates his experience in those terms and in the language associated with them, but he is obliged to distort in so doing. Unfortunately it is his own experience which he distorts and not the current categories which he perhaps ought to have modified.

Of course these two views of the process of simplification are complementary. In order to clarify his political position to his contemporaries, Kristensen is obliged to use their language. He is apparently not prepared at this point in time to be self-sufficient and thereby also absolutely true to his own experience.

And this is where the novel must be judged to have failed. It is vain to speculate on what the novel "might have been", and to attempt to compare it with some imagined ideal. Yet our dissatisfaction is enough basis for judgement. We feel dissatisfied with a communication which fails to be an adequate rendering of what lies beneath its surface, and which fails to challenge established concepts when more than sufficient justification for the challenge is present. We feel dissatisfied with a writer who fails properly to perceive and communicate the depths of his experience, and with a man who conforms with contemporary demands which oppose and distort his own experience. Kristensen had, it seems, the potential for exposing the inadequacies of contemporary debate and for leading his audience then and since into a world only explored by privileged individuals. That this happens to a certain extent despite the failings is sufficient grounds to justify the novel as a central work of modern Danish literature. Yet the failings remain.

„Hørværk“, Tom Kristensens nye Roman, som har svulpet og slaaet haardt, blev straks revet bort fra Gyldendal. Tom Frimand fortæller om Bogens Tilblivelse og om Bar-Tilværelse.

DOD 1930

HANS Hus ligger langt ude paa Heden, omgivet af golde og vintergraa Marker, man tror sig næsten ikke i Danmark.... der er ingen Træer, men Vind og Vejr suser og bider i Byboens Teint. Ensomheden har ikke blot sat skønne Spor i hans Digtning, han, den højt-kultiverede og gennemfortinede, er blevet rundere af Skikkelse, stejl i Blik som i Mening, Veghed er svunden for Styrke.

— Deres Bog er Portrætter, siger jeg.

— Jeg kalder den Romanen om Tyverne.... kun faa af Skikkelserne er typiske Portrætter og ingen af dem er Fotografier.

— De er der da selv?

— Mit Selvportræt, det er en anden Ting, og det er udført i Legemsformat og forhaabentlig saa hensynsløst som vel muligt.... der

var Øjeblikke, mens jeg arbejdede paa Bogen, hvor jeg omtalte mig selv som *Bløddyret*, fordi jeg havde faaet alt det svage i min Karakter frem i Hovedpersonen.... den *Staalffeder* eller.... eller den *Spiral*, som gjorde mig selv til *Aiholdsmand*, den er taget ud af *Frisuren*, jeg vilde jo ikke skrive nogen *Omvendelsesroman*, dem tror man kun paa i *Virkeligheden*, ikke i *Bøgerne*.

— Interiørene er fra „Politiken“?

— Jeg kan citere *Sven Barberes Anmeldelse*: det vilde være affekteret at ignorere, at han i denne Bog vil gøre op med det Afsnit af hans

væggrund var *Klasseforskel*, og min *Forbindelse med og Afstamning fra Underklassen* ligesom krævede af mig, at jeg skulde have faste *Standpunkter*.... *Ironien*, som jeg for Resten elsker — i *Modsætning til Emil Bonnelycke*, der kalder den *Satans Smil* — er mig ikke nok, der er en



Tom Kristensen.

Trang i mig til at være bevæbnet og til at bruge Vaabnene.

— Gav „Politiken“ Dem ikke Lov til det?

— Jo, og jeg har oplevet den store Ære at blive karakteriseret af *Henrik Cavling* som *upaalidelig*, fordi jeg, naar jeg brugte mine Vaaben, ikke tog *bladtekniske* Hensyn. „Politiken“ repræsenterer jo ikke en *Idé*, som Folge deraf kunde det tit være vanskeligt at vide, hvad *Bladteknik* var. Censur har jeg dog aldrig været underkastet. De forstaa, jeg var ikke under Censur, men da jeg ikke vidste noget om *Teknikken i Bladet*, saa

OPS

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Conclusion

The purpose of this final chapter will be to take up again some of the questions touched on in the introduction. We want now, after examining the novels, to turn our attention more expressly to the author. We shall review what the novels have told us about the author and consider the question whether Tom Kristensen is a "typical" figure of the twenties as is usually assumed.

From "confrontation" to reconstruction

The most surprising thing about the novels and most of Kristensen's poetry is that though much of it is personal and even confessional, we know much less about the author than we think. We know a lot of how he thinks and feels about himself but we know almost nothing of how he feels about others, how he reacts to them and they to him. Only by reading a lot of his criticism and some of his interviews can we begin to feel his humour and warmth - one excellent piece must be mentioned in this connection, a memory of Knud Rasmussen, "Knud og Olsen fra Vognmagergade" (in *Bogen om Knud*, 1943). Of course, there is a sense in which Kristensen's view of himself may be more honest and correct than our view of him in his relationships with others, and the novels reveal things which would otherwise remain hidden. Yet there is still a sense in which the novels give only a partial view of their author. We must bear this in mind as we reconsider them. We must also remember that they were practically "crisis works" and that the accompanying volumes of poetry and travel descriptions reveal different aspects of Kristensen's personality, even though they too were essentially works of self-revelation.

What the novels do reveal are the stages of change and development which the author passes. We can observe changes occurring "independently" in his situation - his voyage to China, for example - and changes occurring in his intellectual and emotional response to an influence on his situation - the decision to leave *Politiken*, for example. Obviously, the situation is also influenced by factors not immediately within his control, and so his response and reaction are also influenced by factors in a common, social situation. Therefore the complex view of individual and society must prevail even if we begin by considering the author as if he were an individual in some sort of extra-social isolation

In the first years of the 1920s, Tom Kristensen found himself in a chaotic world, armed only with a sceptic and nihilistic view of public and personal morality and philosophy. There were moments of lyrical abandon and he had the moral reinforcement of a solid university education behind him, but the first were belied by his deep scepticism and the second was denied by his failure to establish himself as a teacher, that is, in a socially respectable position. Moreover he could see no comfort in the general condition of Denmark and the rest of the world, neither in the social sphere nor with respect to political stability and sanity. Whereas until this point, his poetry had been a purely private affair, a means of expression and relief, he now found himself almost involuntarily committed to being an artist, making his art the central element of his relationship to society.

How did he react to this situation? Although his personal convictions and the limited experience available in Denmark told him of the "nihilistic chaos" around him, he had no opportunity to experience the greater scale and harsher reality which seemed to rule the rest of Europe and beyond. In this situation, art seemed to him to be a means of living in imagination what was not available in reality, and he was encouraged in this view by "expressionist" theories of art, accepted by the most influential of his contemporaries. His response was then to shift the emphasis to his own imagination - to his art - and to face there the harsh reality not available elsewhere. And in the confrontation⁸⁹, he had to rely on his own strength of personality, since he believed in no other moral foundation. Thus art changes from being the means of expression and organisation of his response to the world to being both that and the means through which the world exists. Art provides both a stimulus and the response. Yet all this was still very much a personal affair; it had to be reconciled with the function of art as a means of relating to society.

Again contemporary theory helped. By suggesting that all art, opening new possibilities of experience, is polemical, it gave a positive "revolutionary" dimension to this personal confrontation. It also suggested that the resultant work should have an "objective", non-lyrical form, which would make it more public-orientated. Thus

⁸⁹ "Confrontation" is an important word in Kristensen's vocabulary. It is a descriptive term which occurs more often in his discussion of experience after the event rather than in his accounts of the experience itself. It is, for example, the sub-title of *Vindrosen* and lies behind his appeal to young students to "live life dangerously" ("Rusgildet i Studentersamfundet" *Politiken* 3 October 1926). Kristensen has also expressed his admiration and understanding for Ernest Hemingway's courageously dangerous way of life.

the public and the private purposes of Kristensen's art were integrated, especially in the novel *Livets Arabesk*. The result was however not a formal success, because the integration was not complete, even though the demands of "objective" presentation corresponded well enough with the kind of confrontation which Kristensen "practised" at this period, i.e. a determination to "harden" himself against the harshness of reality by "protecting" and "fixing" his feelings and reactions to the discipline of his art (cf. *Ulykken*). Though he felt the need to oppose his self to the world around him, he also felt in a sense unfit to do so. He recognised the demands of such confrontation and felt too weak. Therefore, by recording in art the very process of confrontation he sought to protect himself from its inherent demands and dangers. *Livets Arabesk* is thus simultaneously a place of bold encounter and the shield of self-protection.

Despite the obvious changes of formulation and the new mode of response which Kristensen encountered during and after his visit to China, the basic situation remained the same. *En Anden* also helps him to establish himself against the world, against the arbitrary and nihilistic conditions of existence, while simultaneously he presents this personal artefact as his contribution to society, his social "raison d'être". So far, then, he has made no concessions, for he has simply "sold" his personal art and made it public. In *En Anden*, a process of reconstruction, after confrontation, begins to show itself more clearly. In *Livets Arabesk*, it was still restricted to a belief in the absolute value of art so that indeed art was in all senses the centre of Kristensen's life. In *En Anden*, we find the assertion that it is possible to reconstruct on the basis of the self which had been strong enough to confront the world. On the other hand, we also find in *En Anden* a certain vague doubt about the validity of the reconstruction, a feeling that perhaps there is an element of self-deception in trusting so absolutely in the self and in art. This doubt is however apparently not strong enough to alter radically the basic position. Confrontation continues and becomes more and more reconstruction.

By the time *Hærværk* is written however the author's world has changed. He has realised the implications of his factual position, i.e. that he is "selling" his personal art and himself to maintain his social role, and this is now integrated into the world he confronts. In this sense the world of his fiction has "caught up" with the real situation in which *Livets Arabesk* and *En Anden* had been written, but of which both earlier novels remained unaware. Kristensen now has to face a chaotic, "meaningless" existence and his "prostitution" of his self which has been his main means of survival. In *Hærværk*, however, art is no longer the only available place of experience.

Both Kristensen's statement that he descended into drink and wrote about it afterwards and the novel's irony, which betrays the author's fore-knowledge of the end, indicate that art is in this case a means of reliving and understanding more thoroughly what has already taken place. Certainly this reliving is a necessary complement to the preceding experience, without which the latter would remain incomplete, but art is now nonetheless complementary. The confrontation which *Hærværk* examines is, more than in the earlier novels, reconstruction of something meaningful after winning full understanding of the old meaningless". Yet essentially the reconstruction also requires abandonment of the self, which had been the centre of confrontation. Kristensen discovers that the strategic opposition of self to world which had been the only possible response in his situation has gradually gained the character of a philosophical division of experience which, in the world he now inhabits, the world of the late 1920s, is no longer tenable. He has to abandon that self-absorption which had been his salvation. In contrast, he finds in *Hærværk* that the world is perhaps chaotic and its morality doubtful but that he can nonetheless discover, in reality, morally valid experience which makes him abandon his scepticism and nihilism. In this sense the process of reconstruction has been at least a partial success.

Self-recognition

Confrontation and reconstruction are inevitably accompanied by a process of self-recognition; "inevitable" because of the form of the basic opposition. The need to observe how the self responds to the chaos of a meaningless world encourages Kristensen's apparently innate tendency for self-observation tinged with the irony which helps him to a deeper honesty, and eventually to a respectful, but firm disavowal of self-absorption. Again the important point is that only after a state of complete self-absorption can a further step be made, just as only after the essential confrontation with chaos and meaninglessness can the question of reconstruction be taken up. These are of course simply two aspects of the same turning point, where disavowal of the self and reconstruction within some wider human reality coincide. The self, "the soul", which he "finds" through the novels, is a world of associations, repetitions, influences and offshoots from childhood, sexual and other instinctive emotions. But it is also a self which, though ironic and aggressive, is not always able to face the harshness of the world it confronts. He finds then how he can use as defence against the world both his irony and his artistic ability to describe and "fix" the harshness. This means that he understands better the artist in himself but he also recognises how his artistic ability can lead him to fabricate his own

"false" experience - like rubbing one's eyes to produce a coloured hallucination - and this he rejects. Rejecting artificial experience, in *Hærværk*, he naturally enough goes to the extreme of rejecting all the soul's experience held fast in his art. This is too radical, and after the first extreme impulse has moderated, much of which is not artificial, still stands as a valid discovery will stop

There are no admirable heroes, no men of great moral stature in Kristensen's novels, but what these men tell us in their weakness is how Tom Kristensen in *his* weakness discovered and survived the depths of the self with greater consistency and honesty than others, of even stronger character, might dare to attempt.

The literary product – *Hærværk*

What, then, are the literary results of all this? In a word, the results are *Hærværk* - a "classic" of modern Danish literature - since *Hærværk* is the reconsideration and summation of *Livets Arabesk* and *En Anden*. Yet the results are not so satisfying as *Hærværk's* status might suggest. For the novel can be justly criticised for being inconclusive; not in the sense that there is no once and for all solution to the dilemma of confrontation, nor because of the weakness of its central character, but because we feel that despite his irony, the author is still too attached to what he is describing, he lacks a more solid, epic tone. In this sense *Hærværk* is a less assured work than its predecessors. Despite the immature mixture of literary devices in *Livets Arabesk*, we feel that the author is certain of his position, certain of his theoretical assumptions and of his practical ability to portray and criticise. Of course this is precisely the assurance of immaturity, but it benefits the work. The formal innovations of *Livets Arabesk* - the parallel actions around two figures, the panoramic views, the simultaneous scenes - and the novel's practical application of theoretical demands for "objectivity" help to sustain the impression of an author in full command. The innovations in *En Anden*, however - the split chapters to make visible the relationship of childhood and manhood - leaves the reader less certain of the writer's attitude. The latter cannot properly intervene and on the premises of his construction he is forced to leave Rasmussen to work out his own salvation, without making an unambiguous comment on the validity of Rasmussen's solution. In *Hærværk*, the introduction of a kind of stream of consciousness, whose past tense helps to build up a limited epic distance, again means that the point of view is essentially limited to the main character. Then, because it is clear to any reader that Jastrau is an autobiographical figure, the means available to the author of creating and making evident and epic

distance from his main character are insufficient. Hence though we discern the author's irony, we are not satisfied that it has been given enough room to function properly.

All three novels are in fact more or less disguised autobiographical first-person novels, and the degree of disguise diminishes from *Livets Arabesk* to *Hærværk*. The innovations which Kristensen introduced into Danish literature - particularly the Freudian split-chapters of *En Anden*, the Joycean narrative of *Hærværk* - are both an aid and a limitation. Although they help the disguise, they limit the epic distance which the author's irony requires. In other words, they sustain the author's "lyric" attachment to the experience he describes, and his continued use of art as expression and relief. On the other hand by contributing to the disguise they help him in his social role as artist to present his personal art in a public form; they help him to "prostitute" himself successfully - even in *Hærværk* where part of the protest is aimed precisely at the process of "prostitution".

The lack of what we have called "epic distance" in *Hærværk* is interrelated with Kristensen's failure to recognise properly what he has found and to acknowledge that he has reached no absolute conclusions. The feeling shows itself in his turning to Marxism in the early 1930s, and in the particular manifestation of *Kunst Økonomi Politik*. He tried to embrace a definitive solution despite the lessons of *Hærværk*. This is why *Kunst Økonomi Politik* is a disappointment and is best forgotten, and why we are relieved to see that his critical practice so belied the extremes of his theoretical demands⁹⁰. Ultimately, the greater wisdom which is present but not fully appreciated in *Hærværk*, asserts itself.

Tom Kristensen as a "typical" figure of the 1920s

There remains the question of whether Tom Kristensen is "typical" of the 1920s. If by "typical" we have in mind some concept like "average" applied to a particular persons, then we can say that the excess which is manifest in *Kunst Økonomi Politik* makes Kristensen typical. By this we mean that many people reacted to their shared situation in the late 1920s by adopting one or other extreme and usually unsubtle dogmatism. On the other hand, if we consider Kristensen's various positions throughout the decade, that is, not

⁹⁰ We can appreciate Niels Egebak's wish to reject Kristensen's criticism of his own work in *Kunst Økonomi Politik*, but we can see little point in attacking with such seriousness what has now become a man of straw. *Kunst Økonomi Politik* is important only as a secondary symptom, not as a profound document. (cf. Niels Egebak *Tom Kristensen* 1971 p.92f)

only the presence of extremes but also the contrast between them, we should rather call him "representative" of the 1920s. By "representative" here we are thinking of something like a summation in one person of many "typical" individuals. For in the course of the decade Kristensen "examined" most of the available philosophical and political convictions, from revolutionary aestheticism through scepticism and Catholicism to a form of Marxism. It was his fundamental scepticism and self-irony which pushed him to take up and abandon one position after another, after he had driven each to an extreme in the continuing process of confrontation. In this sense he is "representative" whereas the "typical" individual had one fundamental position which he then pursued, and sometimes refined, unwaveringly.

Tom Kristensen is moreover self-consciously representative because from the moment of his first success with *Fribytterdrømme* he felt himself a public figure, destined to give a public account of himself and his attitude to current ideas. This sensation, which we attributed to his conscious use of art as his means of establishing a social role for himself, was further reinforced as a result of his position as an influential critic. He was aware of and felt responsible for public opinion, until the whole business of "opinion-making" began to disgust him and his refusal to continue became an element of the dilemma which Jastrau confronted and eventually helped him to overcome. It is then inevitable that we find not only the forms of current thought influencing Kristensen's work but also their practical social and political realisations taken up as subject matter. This is what has led even the most superficial reader to assume that Kristensen was somehow "typical of his age".

Furthermore, what we have identified as Kristensen's problem - relating to society through his art - is not limited to him alone. The question of the artist's and particularly the writer's social role was, as we saw earlier, widely discussed. Ultimately the question as far as Kristensen is concerned cannot be considered except in connection with that general discussion, especially because Kristensen uses the terms of the general debate - e.g. Kryger's "communist" arguments - to convey his personal dilemma. Similarly there is a "coincidence" between the terms of Kristensen's desire to confront "self" with "world" and the terms of philosophical and political debate on the positions of "subjectivity" and "objectivity", and of "individual" and "society". Obviously, this is more than "coincidence", and if Kristensen again uses the public terms to describe his personal experience, it is because the two are organically linked, are separate manifestations of the complex response of Copenhagen intellectuals to their post-war world. It may seem superfluous to limit the statement to Copenhagen

intellectuals, or it may appear too much of a limitation. We feel however that it is necessary both to make explicit the limits of Kristensen's "representativeness" which many people simply assume, and to limit the reference of the statement in fact to such a small company.

When we describe Kristensen as typical or representative of the decade, we automatically imply that he did not see beyond current views and formulations. His response was in this sense "limited". Such narrowness shows itself precisely in the way he allowed the public terms of "subjectivity" associated with "individualism" opposed to "objectivity" associated with "socialism" to distort the meaning of his personal confrontation of "self" with "world". He let the pressure of public debate associate an inconsequential political significance to his existential "experiment", and, given his already existing social and political affiliations, he felt bound to disavow completely the so-called "bourgeois individualism" of the soul, a disavowal which does him no good in our eyes.

On the other hand we have made a point of distinguishing between the deeper discoveries and morality of *Hærværk* and the superficial attitudes of the author as expressed in contemporary interviews and articles. Despite the lack of perception, the lack of epic distance and control on the part of the author which this distinction implies, its subtle understanding of the decade and its currents and the broad humanity of its morality raise *Hærværk* above simple representative status. There is hidden in there too, an admirable consistency and honesty "in spite of" the author. Unfortunately, it is what is implied in the word "hidden" and in the "in spite of" - that is, the "typical" limitations of the author - which make *Hærværk* a lesser novel than it might have been, and Tom Kristensen a lesser author.

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 Lauritz Petersen: "Lille Elskede" *Politiken* 31 March
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Marie Bregendahl: "Den blinde Rytter" (Open letter to Harald Bergstedt) (Open letter to Harald Bergstedt)	<i>Politiken</i> 24 April <i>Politiken</i> 3 May
Aksel Sandmose	
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En Hyldest til Tegneren Anoton Hansen	<i>Politiken</i> 26 May
Fredrik Nygaard: "Undervejs"	
Jørgen Vibe: "Slaaen"	
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A.D. Henriksen: "Tanker om Tiden"	<i>Politiken</i> 16 June
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W.S. reymont: "sommeren"	
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Sinclair Lweis: "Babbitt"	<i>Politiken</i> 3 December
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Rudyard Kipling	<i>Politiken</i> 19 December
Den danske Novelle	<i>Tilskueren</i> I p.309
Aktiv Lyrik	<i>Tilskueren</i> I p.410
Bøger og Livsanskuelse	<i>Tilskueren</i> II p.59
Fjærn og nær	<i>Tilskueren</i> II p.96
To russiske Romaner	<i>Tilskueren</i> II p.190
Efteraarets Literatur	<i>Tilskueren</i> II p.317
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<i>Sophus Claussen</i>	
Remarque paa Dansk	<i>Politiken</i> 26 May
Efterarrets Literatur	<i>Tilskueren</i> I p.85
Dansk Prosa	<i>Tilskueren</i> I p.188
Udenlandsk Literatur paa Dansk	<i>Tilskueren</i> I p.264
Populær Videnskab og Rejseskildring	<i>Tilskueren</i> I p.423
Ung dansk Lyrik	<i>Tilskueren</i> II p.1
To Brve om ny Kunst	<i>Tilskueren</i> II p.217
Ludvig Holsteins Naturreligion	<i>Tilskueren</i> II p.217

Den danske Novelle
Kunst og Politik
Poul Levin som Redaktør
To af Efteraarets Romaner

Tilskueren II p.293
Tilskueren Ii p.358
Tilskueren II p.379
Tilskueren Ii p.438

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Verset nu
O Ungdom
Nogle unge Mennesker
Krig og Ævengtyr
Europæisk Lyrik paa Dansk
Franske Romaner
Knut Hamsuns nye Roman
Biografien som Kunst
Strejftog gennem Efteraarets Literatur

Tilskueren I p.43
Tilskueren I p.134
Tilskueren I p.254
Tilskueren I p.426
Tilskueren II p.71
Tilskueren II p.147
Tilskueren II p.249
Tilskueren II p.332
Tilskueren II p.441

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Fremtidens Digtere
Henning Kehlers Mening og min
De norske Præmieromaner
De svenske Præmieromaner
James Joyce
Primitive Lyriker
Kvindens Kamp
Fra Gustav Frenssen til Heinrich Hansen
Nogle Lyspunkter i dansk Lyrik
Digteren Marcus Lauesen

Ekstrabladet 26 March
Ekstrabladet 30 March
Politiken 19 September
Politiken 23 September
Politiken 15-16 September
Tilskueren I p.66
Tilskueren I p.135
Tilskueren I p.190
Tilskueren I p.455
Tilskueren II p.415

1932

Kunst Økonomi Politik
Forord
Carl Nielsen som Prosaist
Johannes V. Jensen
Sigurd Hoel
Hvorledes Kritik bliver til
D.H. Lawrence: "Lady Chatterleys
Elsker"
Henrik Pottopidan og Ungdommen

Social Kunst 7 (Anton Hansen)
Dansk Musiktidsskrift 7 p.15
Tilskueren I p.436
Politiken 25 February
Politiken 26 May

Politiken 25 June
Politiken 25 July

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c) Miscellaneous

1929

(Statement on antifacist congress) *Monde* February

1931

Til Forsvar for Nakskovarbejderne *Monde* Sept. and Oct.

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3 Main works and collections of articles after 1932

<i>Vindrosen – Konfrontationer</i>	(stories)	1934
<i>Mod den yderste Rand</i>	(poems)	1936
<i>Digte i Døgnet</i>		1940
<i>Hvad er Heta</i>	(stories)	1946
<i>Mellem Krigene – Artikler og Kroniker</i>		1946
<i>Til Dags Dato – Artikler og Kroniker</i>		1953
<i>Den sidste Lygte</i>	(poems)	1954
<i>Det skabende Øje – Kroniker</i>		1956
<i>Oplevelser med Lyrik</i>	(criticism)	1957
<i>Den evige Uro</i>	(criticism)	1958
<i>Mord i Pantomimeteatret</i>	(crime story)	1962
<i>I min Tid</i>	(artilces)	1963
<i>Aabenhjertige Fortielser – Erindringsglimt</i>		1966
<i>Kritiker eller Anmedler</i>	(artilces)	1966
<i>Fra Drachmann til Benny Andersen</i>	(criticism)	1967
<i>Tom på Thurø – En samtale mellem Tom Kristensen og Thorkild Bjørnvig</i>		1971

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4 Travel books

<i>En Omvej til Andorra</i>	1947
<i>Rejse til Italien</i>	1950
<i>Hvad var mit Ærinde – Rejseglimt</i>	1968