

Title:

*The issue of arrested personality development in Henrik Ibsen's Peer Gynt.
Readings inspired by Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion*

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Summary of Marit Aalen's dissertation:

*The issue of arrested personality development in Henrik Ibsen's Peer Gynt.
Readings inspired by Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion*

The purpose of this dissertation is to shed new light on central parts of Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* with the help of Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion. The study contributes to an understanding of the main characters, Peer and Solveig, and the dynamics between them. This understanding includes a new interpretation of aspects of the action as well. The scenes in focus are often read within traditions where certain text elements is inadequately understood or ignored. By admitting the work to participate in a hermeneutic dialogue with key contributors to *object relation theory*, new meaning seems to occur.

It is a premise for the study that no *one* understanding of a work like *Peer Gynt* is exhaustive. Meanwhile, there is an epistemological premise that the understanding of the work expands with time. From time to time, the center of gravity is displaced in a manner, which collects all the items on a new basis. Concerning *Peer Gynt*, this study contributes to such a displacement.

That the *self*, in Ibsen research usually synonymous with personality, is *unfulfilled* - has been at the centre of research on *Peer Gynt* for many years. Primarily, the theme is interpreted in an *existential* way, with the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard as the main contributor to the understanding. The present study treats arrested personality development in a *psychodynamical* way. With help of Klein's and Bion's main concepts, the issue of arrestment gains new meaning.

The study considers Peer's problematic drive-life as an expression of deeper relational problems of the kind that object relational theories are concerned with. Based on the same perspective, it considers Solveig's function as an "answer" to this issue. In the course of the drama, Solveig assumes character of a function more than of a person, while Peer is understood as a person all the way.

The entire analysis is based on a meticulous, close reading of the text. The thesis consists of three articles. The central theme in the first article is twofold: One part is about Peer's structure of desire, interpreted as *greed*. The other concerns Peer's split mother representation. The

themes are intimately connected, and constitute two central features of Klein's *paranoid-schizoid position*.

In article two, the central theme is the *reparative forces* in the mind. Relevant to this theme are phenomena like tears, sadness, mourning, guilt and remorse. The study shows that these phenomena, as Ibsen has dramatized them, serve a function in repairing and developing the personality. The theoretical basis for this article is Klein's notion of the *depressive position*, with its emphasis on how mourning and guilt can repair damages of the internalized maternal object.

The theme of the third article is twofold, but the two issues are intimately associated. The first theme considers a distinct disturbance in Peer's way of using thinking in *learning from experience*, interpreted in the light of Bion. Solveig's development into a *container* in Bion's sense forms the second part of the theme.

Excerpts of the main findings:

A greedy desire in Klein's sense, seems to form the main motivation for the bride-robbery, and thus for the direction the drama takes. This greed constitutes a structure of desire which is also the cause of mother Åse's poverty, and tentatively of her death. It also forms the underlying premise for the content and character of Peer's guilt towards his mother.

Phenomena like mourning and guilt seem to have capability to heal the damage made to the maternal object by greed and envy. However, Peer encounters mourning and guilt in ways that evacuate or deny the content of the feelings, congruent with Klein's views on defenses against psychic pain.

Peers inability to link his life experiences together, seems to be due to a deficient ability to think, in Bion's sense. As an answer to this deficiency, Solveig develops attitudes that correspond to the elements of Bion's container function, characterized by capacities like reverie, and eschewing of memory and desire.

Seen together, the findings represent a new understanding of key characteristics of Peer's behavior and life choices, and of his interaction with and relationship to Solveig. The findings form a comprehensive pattern that in its structure and in its details corresponds with Klein and Bion's ideas. Moreover, they represent a new way to understand Peer's arrested personality development.

What legitimizes literary interpretation is that the interpretation integrates key elements of the story-line in the work. This study intends to give a psychoanalytic reading of *Peer Gynt* that take the drama's premises into consideration.

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The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to shed light on central parts of Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* with the help of psychoanalytic object relations theory. In particular, I want to contribute to an understanding of the main characters, Peer and Solveig, and the dynamics between them. This understanding includes a new interpretation of aspects of the action as well. The scenes in focus are often read within traditions where certain text elements, in my opinion, is inadequately understood or ignored. By admitting the work to participate in a hermeneutic dialogue with key contributors to object relation theory, new meaning seems to occur.

Initially, I drew on various object relation theorists. Each of them delivered concepts suited to understand various aspects of the characters. Eventually I concluded that the study would

improve by gathering all interpretation under two main theorists, namely Melanie Klein (1882-1960) and Wilfred Bion (1897-1979).

These theorists are so closely connected that one may say they contribute to a relatively unified theory of the psyche. Bion was in analysis with Klein and developed his theory as a continuation of her thinking, although his contribution was highly original. The two are considered pivotal in founding what is known as *object relations theory*. In addition, they are among the ten authors that are most searched for on PEP-WEB, the international psychoanalytic database, so their topicality is not declining.

It is a premise for my study that no *one* understanding of a work like *Peer Gynt* is exhaustive. Meanwhile, there is an epistemological premise in my reading that the understanding of the work expands with time. This means that one reading does not necessarily replace a previous one. Together, all readings with a certain significance contribute to a growing tissue of interpretation. Similar to the way psychoanalysis develops, the tissue of understanding does not just grow; from time to time, it changes character. This means that the center of gravity is displaced in a manner, which collects all the items on a new basis. And concerning the work of *Peer Gynt*, it is my wish to contribute to such a displacement.

There are no final answers in literature analysis. To be considered a valid contribution, a study has to adjust to some method criteria. I will discuss my method later in the introduction. Here, I will point to an interesting feature of my findings. It turns out that there is a congruent structure between the body of ideas developed by Klein and Bion, and some central dramatic features in *Peer Gynt*. This correspondence is not just restricted to individual occurrences, but seems to form a pattern in *Peer Gynt*, a pattern that turns out to be equivalent to a pattern formed by main concepts of the two theorists. Moreover, the sequence of the three papers, both thematically and sequentially, adjust to this pattern.

I will give a more comprehensive account of the articles later, but present the headings here so that the reader can follow my reasoning further. The thesis consists of three articles, of which I am the sole author of two:

Article one:

The structure of desire in *Peer Gynt*'s relationship to Solveig. A reading inspired by Melanie Klein

Theme: Desire and splitting

Article two:

Tears, remorse and reparation in Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. A reading inspired by Melanie Klein.

Theme: Mourning, guilt and reparation

Article three:

Stray thoughts – seeking home, Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* read in light of Wilfred Bion's ideas.

Theme: Disturbed thinking and containment

I will say a few words about how the *sequence* of the articles relates to the structure of *Peer Gynt*. The first paper focuses on the first half of *Peer Gynt*. The second paper concentrates mainly on the middle part of the work. The last is mainly occupied with the fifth act, especially emphasizing the last scene. The first paper employs terms from Klein's paranoid-schizoid position (1946). The second one draws on Klein's *depressive position* (1946), while the third paper uses Bion's theory of thinking (1962a), but also his concept of *container* (1970) to interpret hidden meanings in the text.

This sequence corresponds to an order within Klein and Bion's contribution, as well as to how Ibsen organized the topics in *Peer Gynt*, notably in selected but crucial parts of the work. My observation reminds on Otto Hageberg's (1978, p. 16), who with reference to other works and classic psychoanalysis, claims that Ibsen builds up a *system*. The system I have observed is of another kind and may be questioned, but I consider it both distinct and discernable when one first catches sight of it. It is not immediately obvious, and requires meticulous efforts of interpretation to become visible. This effort is just what has been my task.

Another point of the study is that I try to show how Ibsen, through *Peer Gynt*, changes the ideas that have influenced him. He does it in a way that makes a psychodynamic understanding of human relationships emerge in the work to a *certain degree*. It is well

known that this is the case with Ibsen's contemporary dramas, which have been sources of great inspiration to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. In these works, we find ideas like *repression* and *unconscious conflict* dramatized in ways that not only inspired Freud, but also can be said to anticipate his anthropology.

I will claim that while Ibsen's contemporary dramas contain phenomena that are comprehensible within Freudian psychoanalysis, *Peer Gynt* contains psychodynamic phenomena that can only be understood after the object relations theory has become part of psychoanalysis. With this development, destabilizing phenomena comes into focus, with an elaboration of terms such as *splitting*, *greed* and *envy* (Klein, 1957), which are in focus in my first article. Furthermore, the repairing function of *mourning* and *guilt* is brought to the center of the theory (Klein, 1935), which makes up the theoretical tools of the second article. Not least, motherly concern as a factor for the integration of the psyche is elaborated in distinct ways to form the concept of *containing* (Bion, 1962a). Together with *thinking* as a way of processing emotional experience (Ibid.), this is theme for the third article.

Although these contributions are impendent in Freud, they are developed into a more comprehensive theory where the dyadic aspects of child development are emphasized. Klein and Bion play a crucial part in this process. Although their contributions may be considered controversial by many clinicians, their main concepts are widely in use. I consider their contributions as central in a psychodynamic *anthropology*, developed as an extension of Freud. An important change in object relation theories, with Fairbairn as a crucial contributor, is that the drive aspects of human life are seen as directed towards other human beings. The drive addresses someone, and that *someone* (in philosophy similar to what is often called *the Other*), is central in shaping the nature of the drive, and thereby the personality. These core features of object relations theory are analytic tools for understanding the psychodynamics of *Peer Gynt*, thereby widening its meaning.

The purpose of the study is more precisely to show that an object relational theoretical conceptualization of the psyche is present in *Peer Gynt*, in a dramatized way and juxtaposed with other themes. A distinct feature of object relations theory is the focus on dyadic relationships. That does not mean that Klein and Bion are not concerned with oedipal relations, or that the (absent) father is not central in *Peer Gynt*. It means that the mother-child relationship is a potent center, both in the theory and in the play. Because Peer is an adult, the relation is primarily considered expressions of intrapsychic phenomena. This perspective is

accordant with how the theorists treat the basic relationships, and as I will show, with how they are dramatized by Ibsen.

Ibsen's transforming of ideas

The Ibsen scholar Asbjørn Aarseth considers *Peer Gynt* in this way:

... romantic expansion of the old Christian morality, an existentially and ethically reflected presentation of character, where both national folklore and classic mythology are drawn upon, and where the thinkers of the time, in Ibsen's instance primarily Hegel and Kierkegaard, supply some of the fundamental premises and legitimize the springy leaps¹ (2000, p. 63).

I put it as a premise that those philosophers inspired Ibsen, even though he had a tendency to deny it. The crucial point is that he does something quite new based on this inspiration.

In several newer interpretations, we find that scholars go on applying concepts from Hegel or Kierkegaard without paying attention to how Ibsen develops these ideas in a new direction. For instance, Østerud starts out by referring Ibsen's rejection of being identified with Kierkegaard, but follows up with doing nearly the same. For instance, he identifies Kierkegaardian *irony* and *anxiety* with fantastic figures in *Peer Gynt* (2000).

Yet another way to identify ideas without paying attention to change is the kind of intertextuality we find in Shapiro (1990). He points to a vast amount of concurrent text passages in different works of Kierkegaard and *Peer Gynt*. Ibsen, as I read him, dramatizes a *psychodynamic content* in formal categories of subject formation. To a *certain degree* he seems to dramatize a psychodynamic content in Kierkegaardian categories, such as *choice* – the consequences of *lack of choice* – and the role of *remorse*, treated as *processes*. I adhere to an understanding of both *Either-Or* and *Peer Gynt*, as expressing a *destabilized subject* as part of a modern view on man (Solstad, 2010, p. 13). In my reading of *Peer Gynt*, the destabilized subject is considered to be of a psychodynamic kind.

Several interpretations of *Peer Gynt* is based on relations between concepts from *Either-Or*, without a perspective of amendment (e.g. Bull, 1956, Groven Myhren, 1979). In my opinion,

¹ Hedda Solberg Rui's translation from Norwegian: "... romantisk ekspansjon av den gamle kristne moraliteten, en eksistens- og moralfilosofisk reflektert personframstilling, hvor nasjonal folklore og klassisk mytologi trekkes inn, og hvor tidens tenkere, hos Ibsen i første rekke Hegel og Kierkegaard, leverer noen av de fundamentale premissene og legitimerer de spenstige sprangene "

the way I consider these relations lies in embryo in the last part of Kierkegaard's *Either-Or* (1843). I will not trace this point further. but rather concentrate on the psychodynamic ideas. Whether early stages in Ibsen's changing of ideas is to be found in the mentioned philosophers, or not, lies outside my thesis. However, Ibsen's developing of these ideas amount to the thesis' main findings.

Some scholars are interested in how unconscious elements in Ibsen's mind have played a part in his creation of *Peer Gynt*. Some look for parallel elements in Ibsen's life and his work (e.g. Anthi, 1981). I do not concur with this strand of scholars. I will not focus on how unconscious processes may or may not have affected the work, except for one single contribution. It does not focus on Ibsen's personal mental condition, but on how unconscious processes may *assist* in the shaping of ideas. This contribution supports my point that Ibsen changed the ideas influencing him during his creative process. In what follows, I will say a few words about how creative processes in the unconscious may support the changing of ideas.

In a paper on unconscious elements in the composition of *Peer Gynt*, Olson underlines that "the subconscious is a kind of workshop for the easy manipulation of ideas" (1922, p. 68). He refers to Myers, who claims that a great author like Ibsen has a:

... power of *utilizing a wider range than other men can utilize of faculties in some degree innate in all* - a power of appropriating the results of *subliminal mentation to subserve the supraliminal stream of thought*; so that an 'inspiration of genius' will be, in truth, a subliminal uprush, an emergence into the current of ideas which the man is consciously manipulating of other ideas which he has not consciously originated, but which have shaped themselves beyond his will in profounder regions of his being. (as cited in Olson, 1922, p. 68)

In line with a psychoanalytic view on the mind, I consider influence from the unconscious as a form of infiltration. This is a generally accepted psychoanalytic understanding. Unconscious forces infiltrate the conscious ones. This point connects to the psychoanalytic conception of the relation between primary and secondary processes of thinking. The opposition between the primary process and the secondary process corresponds to that between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988).

Olson claims that this process enriches the development of new ideas. He is not occupied with Ibsen's personal unconsciousness, but his access to an unconscious reality of common relevance. This access allows Ibsen's work to participate in a hermeneutic dialogue with the thinking of Klein and Bion, whose intention was to conceptualize common human conditions of a distinct kind. I have to underline here that *Peer Gynt* encompasses a much wider range of thematic cycles than the psychodynamic one in which my study is centred.

To interpret actions, fantastic figures and metaphors as expressing intrapsychic conditions, as I do, may resemble an *allegorical* reading of the work. I will not recount the comprehensive discussion of the meaning of allegory, but rely on Østerud, who claims that he reads *Peer Gynt* allegorically on modern premises (2000, p. 75). Tjønneland discusses the use of allegory in readings of *Peer Gynt*. He gives special attention to a fantastic figure, which is not included in my analysis, namely The Strange Passenger (1989). Even though these scholars adhere to a more elaborated meaning of allegory, I consider the term relevant to my reading, especially to the role of Solveig, and to the last act. However, I do not make a point of it in the articles.

An allegorical reading is not necessarily bound to one particular perspective. Most allegorical readings of *Peer Gynt* have existential², idealistic or Christian frames of interpretation. I am influenced by several of these interpretations, and try to challenge these kind of models more than I challenge the psychoanalytic one. This is due to my ambition to contribute to a general understanding of *Peer Gynt*, and not to a psychoanalytic sidetrack with little or no influence on Ibsen research. At the same time, my interpretation does adhere to a psychoanalytic tradition, so I will give psychoanalytic readings relatively large space in this introduction.

To read *Peer Gynt* allegorically is no longer a matter of course. Many scholars read the work more literal or realistic, and not primarily to reveal a meaning hidden in metaphors. In my view, Helland (2000) is an example of such a reading. He claims that Solveig is completely out of touch with who Peer really is, seated as she is in her distant world of daydreaming. An allegorical way to read the text will somehow imply that Solveig relates to Peer in a meaningful way, in which daydreaming makes up a crucial part.

It is a premise for my interpretation that intrapsychic relations color fantasized and real relationships in a projective way through Ibsen's protagonist. It applies to Peer's perceptions

² Unless I refer to Kierkegaard, I use the term *existential* in line with Daniel Haakonsen (1978, p.21)

of magical as well as more realistic characters. To claim the mother-child relationship to be an intrapsychic phenomenon is not in itself allegorical. In the way I read *Peer Gynt*, it is Peer's intrapsychic situation, and particularly his relations to maternal representations, that are in focus. This way of reading adheres to another point in Østerud's considerations of reading Ibsen. He argues for the legitimacy of interpreting all characters, metaphors and scene descriptions as expressions of existential themes relating to the protagonist's own self (1981). Although Østerud himself does not read the work in a psychoanalytic way, he suggests a general frame for reading which I approve.

In the next chapter, I will elaborate on some key contributions to psychoanalytic readings of *Peer Gynt*.

Interpretations of *Peer Gynt* based on psychoanalytic theory

There has been published surprisingly few interpretations of *Peer Gynt* based on a psychoanalytic perspective. In the database for psychoanalytic literature (PEP-WEB), we find only three articles containing interpretations of the work *Peer Gynt* (Jeffreys, 1924, Anthi, 1981, Heuscher, 1991). *Peer Gynt* as a personality type is mentioned in far more articles, but only as an illustration of different personality traits. These articles have no analysis of the whole work, nor of the dynamics of Peer's personality. Three analyses are a very low figure, when the database contains a large number of journals from the last hundred years, in addition to a number of central psychoanalytic books. A review of other databases resulted in only a few articles where the work is interpreted psychoanalytically, although one cannot completely rule out the fact that other relevant contributions may have been overlooked. In the following, I will render some key points from the articles in question.

Jeffreys

The oldest articles are characterized by a focus on erogenous zones and associated drive conflicts of early psychoanalysis. Harold Jeffreys (1924) for example, is consistently concerned with Peer's anal erotic conflicts, and he interprets key textual elements in *Peer Gynt* as expressions of urine, faeces, castration or intercourse. These interpretations seem highly speculative and stand without arguments based on the work's own logic and structure. Jeffreys identifying the Dovre-king's hall as rectum can perhaps make sense, also in the light of an object relational focus, which at the time was not developed. Such a view on the Dovre-hall can be said to be in lineage with Donald Meltzer, a central post-Kleinian analyst. However, when Jeffreys considers the church bells rescuing Peer from the hall as a swinging

penis urinating, he seems to stretch the text a bit too far. In addition, Solveig's prayer book represents the penis. Let us see what Jeffreys himself writes in *Psychoanalytic Review* in 1924:

“ .. for Peer Gynt the prayer-book is a refinement of urine. The attribution to Solveig of a penis (...) The ringing of church bells in this scene and in the troll scene stands for the waving of the penis during urination. “ (p. 380)

Today, such interpretations only evoke laughter, and they do not contribute to put psychoanalytic interpretation of literature in a positive light. Jeffreys' interpretations are not only an expression of a *Zeitgeist* and a drive-oriented psychoanalysis; it also demonstrates a striking lack of consideration to how a meeting between psychoanalytic theory and a dramatic poem can occur.

Reich

If we go to an article published four years before Jeffreys', we find a completely different conception of the relationship between text and interpretation. Wilhelm Reich, who lived some years in Norway in the 1930s, wrote an analysis of *Peer Gynt*, which he presented in the Psychoanalytic Society in Vienna in 1920. It is not unlikely that Freud himself was present, but he obviously did not become interested in *Peer Gynt*. We cannot find a single reference to *Peer Gynt* in Freud's texts, as they appear in PEP-WEB.

Also for Reich, erotic conflicts and sexuality as a defence against solitude are central to the interpretation of Peer. In contrast to Jeffreys, Reich shows respect for the integrity of the text. In line with Jeffreys and later interpreters, he understands Peer's basic erotic state as incestuous. What makes it impossible for him to realize a love relationship is this incestuous structure. Reich argues, also in line with many later interpreters, that mother Åse is in love with Peer. This interpretation is based on a text excerpt that Ibsen actually did not use in the final version of *Peer Gynt* (1920, p. 6). Also later in the article, Reich refers to drafts Ibsen rejected, as evidence for his interpretation.

In my view, Ibsen's drafts show steps towards the final manuscript. Therefore, they cannot be used to build up under an interpretation of the final work. On the contrary, they show what Ibsen left behind in order to reveal the meaning of his final work. Although one should be careful to interpret the author's intention, it remains clear that what we find in the finished work is what the author wanted to be there. That is the very reason why earlier drafts were

rejected. They are however, in my view, interesting when we want to trace how Ibsen changed the significance of the text during the working process. Therefore, they are of interest for one part of my project, namely how ideas change during Ibsen's composition of *Peer Gynt*. This, however, is not Reich's point.

For Reich, *Peer Gynt* is a story about the way incestuous desire drives Peer into psychosis. This is dramatized as a magical reality, culminating in the madhouse in Cairo. The incestuous desire prevents Peer from choosing Solveig, because it pervades their meeting in the woods. At this point, Reich is completely in line with my interpretation. I, however, try to develop this theme further.

Reich also believes that Peer's bride robbery is motivated by his oedipal wishes, because Ingrid only becomes attractive when she belongs to another, namely Mads. When she was free, Peer was not interested. This is, in my opinion, a relevant interpretation. In my analysis, however, I have concentrated on the dyadic aspects of Peer's relationships.

In line with Jeffreys, Reich interprets the events in the Dovre-hall as expressions of primitive bodily functions. Furthermore, his conjecture is that Peer has an unconscious sense of guilt for his incestuous fantasies. This guilt drives him toward a psychosis. Reich's interpretations seem reasonable within an oedipal/neurotic concept, as an interpretation of Peer's drive life and his lack of ability to love. It is also easy to support the view of Peer's "mountain spell" as a psychosis, surviving as a basic structure and culminating in a madhouse in Cairo. Reich's interpretation may well be regarded as a step towards my interpretation in light of Bion's thinking, although I take my departure from different parts of the texts.

The most interesting aspect of Reich's analysis is, in my view, his insistence on the way fantasy life is shaped by unconscious conflicts, and how these fantasies influence the choices made by Peer. In that way, he makes it clear that a fantasy can have a causal effect on the development of the plot of the drama. This is a crucial point in my analysis in my first article, and in my view on what I have called the "werewolf fantasy." Reich does not comment on this central fantasy. It seems as if the role of aggression in Peer's incestuous desire has no space in Reich's conception. Nor is the splitting of the female image a topic for him. In my opinion, there is a connection between these two "absent themes" and the state of psychoanalytic theory at that time. Perhaps this "absence" in psychoanalysis has been a condition for the development of object relations theory in the 1930s and after. What was

beyond Reich's horizon in 1920 is now within reach, thanks to this theoretical development. To make use of this development is a central part of my project.

Groddeck

Since Georg Groddeck is a psychoanalyst, and has written an article about *Peer Gynt*, I mention him even though he has not contributed to any new understanding of the work. His article "Peer Gynt from psychoanalytic viewpoint" (Groddeck, 1967) contains little that in my eyes can be seen as "psychoanalytic". It is a pity that he represents psychoanalysis in such a central, Norwegian anthology of *Peer Gynt*. He puts forth an entirely general understanding of the work. Of some interest to my work is the fact that he points to the incestuous element in Peer's relationships to Åse and Solveig, and that he sees The Green Woman as "a caricature of the mother symbol", a theme I elaborate on in article one.

LanLan

Based on Freud's *Das Ich und das Es* the literary historian Xie Lanlan applied Freud's structural model to *Peer Gynt*. She regards Peer as ego weak and subject to the forces of id, while Solveig represents the superego (2005). Lanlan writes that Solveig evolves from a fairly realistic to a purely symbolic figure, and finally represents an ego ideal that Peer is unable to integrate. She considers all the women in Peer's life as psychic representations of forces in Peer's mind. In a way similar to my reading, she sees the contradiction between The Green Woman and Solveig as an expression of an ambivalence that Peer, because of his lack of ego strength, is unable to integrate. She concludes that:

..the female characters and the images of women that Peer produces are to be regarded as symbolic rather than realistic figures is no doubt connected with the fact that Peer never succeeds in establishing a stable ego that manages to integrate the ambivalent forces in his mind. The "ego" never becomes the centre in Peer that organises his life in a coordinated interplay between the three instances, which according to Freud structures the psyche. This is perhaps also the reason that one cannot apply Hegel's triadic dialectics to *Peer Gynt*. The oppositions cannot be mediated. The "ego" remains unoccupied and empty; the synthesis of the antitheses does not come about (2005, p. 178).

I quote this to show how a psychodynamic understanding of the split in Peer's woman image is parallel to Hegel's dialectics. Many interpreters have stated that the split between Solveig

and The Green Woman cannot be "mediated" in Hegel's sense, i.e. that it cannot form a new unit where the contradictions are lifted.

My point is that we, in *Peer Gynt*, find rudiments of such a mediation of contradictions. This takes place through the work of *remorse*³, a word emerging in Peer's associations. In Kierkegaard's comments on Hegel, it is essential that Kierkegaard considers the choice as the working factor for solving existential contradictions. This Kierkegaardian opposition to Hegel permeates large portions of the interpretation tradition regarding *Peer Gynt*. That is why LanLan puts Freud's thoughts about integration in relation to Hegel's idea of mediation.

My contribution to the understanding of this theme in *Peer Gynt* is that the split-off object, represented by Solveig and The Green Woman, can be integrated through a painful mourning, understood as remorse.

Anthi

In the middle of last century, the focus of psychoanalysis gradually shifted from neurotic drive conflicts to internal splits and deficiencies. The idea of an undeveloped self with deficiencies in object relations became central. This development can roughly be divided into two schools, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world, namely object relations theory and self-psychology. My analysis of *Peer Gynt* is based on object relation models - the only one so far - while the self-psychological model has inspired a few analyses of the work.

Within self-psychology, we find a focus on narcissistic disorders, with a split between grandiosity and inferiority feelings as a central dynamics. In this tradition, we find Per Anthi's (1981) analysis of *Peer Gynt*, where Peer is considered to have a narcissistic personality. That Peer shows an excessive need for admiration, has grandiose fantasies and inadequate attachment patterns is easy to agree with. Anthi is inspired by Heinz Kohut's focus on grandiose fantasies in combination with underlying devaluation and shame. He finds a polarization between these two tendencies in Peer and interprets Peer's grandiose fantasies as a protection against inferiority and shame. We find this viewpoint expressed by several interpreters (e.g. Gerland, 1996) and I concur in the main points of these analyses.

Precisely because it is a widespread understanding that Peer is narcissistically disturbed, I omit this point in my interpretation. The relation between an object relational and a self-

³ Norwegian: Anger

psychological model is an interesting issue, on which *Peer Gynt* is fit to shed light. This may be a clue to pursue, but here I will just state that there is no contradiction between narcissistic dynamics and my interpretation of the work. On the contrary, together they form a nuanced and complex picture of the protagonist in Ibsen's drama.

While Anthi adhere to a self-psychological understanding, he also mentions a fantasy with "orally aggressive content", namely where Peer will turn himself into a werewolf. Anthi believe this fantasy better can be understood in light of Otto Kernberg, a point he does not pursue. Because Klein to some extent has inspired Kernberg, this could indicate that Anthi here suggests the relevance of analysing the werewolf fantasy along the line I do. Anthi also refers to envy as part of the narcissistic dynamics without pursuing the topic. Actually, he lets the central Kleinian themes, oral aggression and envy, stand undeveloped. The development of these themes is an essential part of my work.

Anthi's interpretation is characterized by a tendency to identify single narcissistic phenomena, without connecting them to the over-all progress of the work. This means that his interpretation fails to shed light on key twists in the work, e.g. the bride-robbery and Peer's meetings with Solveig and the magical world. Anthi concludes that Peer finally has his narcissistic dream realized, namely to be united with an idealized object, represented by Solveig, in the last scene. Whether Anthi see this union as a new opportunity, or as an empty dream, remains open.

Anthi puts emphasis on validating, as he says, his findings with similar phenomena in the author himself (1981). Therefore, he analyses a dream Ibsen had, looking for narcissistic traits in the author. Thus, he moves outside of the methodological framework for my analysis. I do not use elements from the author's life in my interpretation of the work. A biographical reading, such as the one Anthi perform, is otherwise perfectly valid.

Gerland

Literary scholar Oliver Gerland (1996) is also reading *Peer Gynt* in light of Kohut's self-psychology, but with no reference to Anthi. This demonstrates probably the fact that literary scholars and psychoanalysts as a rule operate in separate worlds, and with journals that are not read across disciplines. I have tried to break this tendency by deliberately publishing articles in both types of journals (e.g. *Ibsen Studies* and *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*).

Gerland approaches in detail Kohut's theory of the bipolar self, and describes how absence of empathy and of optimal frustration can arrest the self in a fragmented and narcissistic state. Then, he applies his account of Kohut's theory on Peer Gynt as a person. He is in specific ways dwelling on what we retrospectively get to know about Peer's parents. He emphasizes how they in different ways have deprived Peer of the opportunity to face life's challenges in a realistic manner.

With this portrayal of Peer's background, based on retrospective glimpses, Gerland aims at explaining why Peer treats any person he meets as self-objects, i.e. as someone whose only task is to mirror Peer's fragmented self. Despite of the fact that the word self-object is not often used in Ibsen research, Gerland understands Peer's relationships in line with most interpreters. Solveig plays the role of self-object per se. In the last scene, she offers Peer a new opportunity, by accepting Peer's idealization of her. Thus, she attains a possibility to reflect Peer in an authentic and thereby stimulating way, unlike all the superficial mirroring he has been exposed to throughout life. This point represents a step towards my views on Solveig, in article three, where I develop an understanding of her function in light of Bion's container-concept. In doing so, I am able to include more nuances from how Ibsen has constructed her, than can be explained merely by the self-object function.

In line with a self-psychological focus, Gerland stresses Peer's grandiosity as an expression of unmodified ambitions. With focus on ambitions, Gerland points to a central difference between the main interest of self-psychology and object-relations theory. Where the latter mainly focuses on *relations* in a psychodynamic perspective, self-psychology is preoccupied with *ambitions*, in terms of fulfilment of talents and abilities.

The analysis makes sense, but neither Gerland nor Anthi link their findings to the storyline of *Peer Gynt*. Thereby, they are only to a limited degree successful in shedding light on Peer's motives for acting the way he does. It is by an understanding of the *motives determining action* that psychoanalysis really has potential to contribute to the understanding of the *work Peer Gynt*, and not only shed light on single aspects of the work.

Heuscher

Julius Heuscher (1991) draws on a broad range of classics in his interpretation of *Peer Gynt*. He refers to Kierkegaard, Goethe and Dante, and he puts philosophical and psychodynamic understandings of self-development on equal footing. Moreover, he rephrases large parts of

the drama with a general interpretation, without a significant psychodynamic understanding. As many others, he claims that Peer does not understand the necessity of an intersubjective relationship to become an authentic person. Neither does he specify how Ibsen has dramatized that possibility in the character of Solveig, beyond a very general intersubjective understanding of becoming a self. Heuscher writes: "A self, in fact, can exist only if it is sustained by suchlike loving relatedness, by an intersubjective relationship, for being related to another is an absolutely essential aspect of self" (1991, p. 90).

Furthermore, he writes that an authentic self can be suppressed for a long period. However, it is not lost and can be awakened by means of a person who "remembers" as Solveig does. He refers to Goethe, Faust and Kierkegaard, but does not clarify the very difference between a philosophical view on becoming a person with help of *an Other*, and a psychoanalytic view of these processes. He does not at all specify matters like the character and mission of relationships, how a self may be preserved throughout life, or what aspects of a self he is talking about. The difference between the philosophers, who also disagree, and psychoanalysis, is disguised. He concludes that Peer's self is preserved in the faith of Solveig's, and does not contribute to the understanding of the work.

My aim in the third article is to *specify how* Solveig can be said to preserve Peer's self, the way Ibsen has constructed her and the way the last scene can be understood in light of Bion's container model.

Hammer

The philosopher Espen Hammer (2000) has written an analysis of *Peer Gynt*, inspired by Hegel, Freud and Lacan. I will try to render some of his key points that are of a psychoanalytic nature.

Hammer aims to enlighten a modern comprehension of the subject, which may be said to form a theme in *Peer Gynt*. In such a comprehension, the subject has a number of contradictory traits, whether they are considered either philosophically or psychologically. Like many scholars, Hammer focuses on Peer's incestuous relationship with Solveig, and consider it the result of an underlying separation trauma. With Lacan's terminology, such a trauma makes it difficult to enter the symbolic order of incest taboo where the reality principle prevail. Hammer regards The Green Woman as a reflection of Peer's incestuous, regressive

and non-symbolized sexuality, and considers the union with Solveig in the last scene as "psychosexual-regressive" (Ibid, p. 55).

Furthermore, Hammer regards Peer's repeated seductions and break-ups as *a repetition compulsion*. Beneath this seduction of women, there is a wish to repair the wound caused by his separation from the mother. Such repair presupposes an integration of the ego-dystonic and dark forces within himself. Peer is not able to do so, and he thus repeats an unsuccessful encounter with these unintegrated forces, which Hammer, with a Lacanian term, calls *the real* (Ibid, p. 57).

Hammer is also concerned with the point that Peer needs to enter a process of mourning to heal his trauma. However, Hammer does not link this particular idea any closer to Ibsen's work. He anchors his interpretation in one single text fragment, which I also dealt with in my analysis, namely where the tears in the final act accuses Peer for not having been allowed to repair the wound. Here, Hammer is influenced by Hegel and not by psychoanalysis. He thinks that Hegel in his early view on subject formation, considered it as contingent upon a mourning process (personal communication, 2014).

I have in particular attached importance to Hammer's claim that the wound in Peer's mind represents an unrealized self, which may emerge through a process of mourning. (see article two). From there I can proceed with a Kleinian understanding of the function of tears in Ibsen's play. However, the word "wound" cannot be found in Klein's writings in that same sense. Thus, when I, in article two, emphasize that Peer seems to have a wound in his psyche attributed to the paranoid-schizoid position, I base my interpretation on Julia Kristeva's reading of Klein (2000/2001 p. 83).

Summary of psychoanalytic readings

This brief review of psychoanalytically founded interpretations of *Peer Gynt* shows that there are two types of psychoanalysis, which dominate:

1. Freud-inspired interpretations emphasizing instinctual drive and trauma.
2. Kohut-inspired interpretations emphasizing narcissistic disturbances of the self.

Object relations theory, which is currently regarded as the main orientation in psychoanalysis (Gullestad & Killingmo, 2005), is not represented at all. An analysis of *Peer Gynt* in light of

object relations theory is precisely what is lacking in the understanding of the work. Atle Kittang (personal communication) has underlined the relevance of such an interpretation.

My impression is that none of the analyses I have reviewed are founded on a consistent, close reading of the work. The interpretations are only weakly anchored in excerpts from Ibsen's text. Where the text is rendered, we are to a small degree explained how the interpretations are anchored in the selected text. The text excerpts appear as illustrations to the interpretation, rather than the other way around. It remains unclear how one reads a distinct psychoanalytic theme *out of* the text element. Instead, it often seems that a meaning is read *into* the text. At the same time, I would say that all the analyses in total touch upon the central passages in *Peer Gynt*. For instance, the motives for the bride robbery, the reasons for Peer to leave Ingrid after having seduced her, the Dovre King's "enough" and "going roundabout", are all considered in the analyses. Likewise, the understanding of the role of The Green Woman, and Peer's motive for leaving Solveig in the third act. Likewise, how Peer's fragmented self is expressed through the fourth act, and on what basis the director of the madhouse appoints Peer to "The Interpreters' Kaiser — on the basis of Self! ". Not least, the function of Solveig in relation to Peer in the last scene is interpreted in psychoanalytic light, often in self-psychological terms. No one specifies his or her analysis in the direction my thesis does.

It is my conclusion that these psychoanalytic interpretations usually relate to individual scenes, and only to a limited extent connect the interpretation to the work's progress as dramatic action. Fredrik Engelstad (1985, p. 63) emphasizes that what legitimizes literary interpretation is precisely this; that the interpretation integrates key elements of the story-line in the work. Here, we have to note the difference between identifying a psychodynamic issue - which in itself may not make us much wiser, as Erik Bjerck Hagen points out (2014, p. 359) - and demonstrating how the same issues in a decisive way affect the development of the work. This has been my ambition; to give a psychoanalytic reading of *Peer Gynt* that considers the drama's premises.

Psychoanalytic literary perspectives and *Peer Gynt*

From the time Freud demonstrated an explicit interest in Ibsen's work, one has considered psychoanalytic theory relevant in understanding Ibsen. This implies both that works as *Peer Gynt* is interpreted from that perspective, as I have given an account for, but also that distinct psychoanalytic concepts and ways of thinking are considered useful in Ibsen research. I will say some words about the latter.

The psychoanalytic idea of *overdetermination* is often related to Ibsen's work (Hageberg 1978, p. 18). This means that the work nourishes on several sources. At the same time, the work carries several meanings, partly of contradictory character, but which nevertheless work together. Jørgen Dines Johansen points out that all the meanings of a work are woven together in a single string of words (2004, p. 73). Different meanings and different layers in the text are by far carried out by the same words and compositions of words, and can only be separated from one another by analytical measures. It is these measures I seek to perform in this thesis. I make a point of the multiplicity of meanings inherent in words, and focus on another part of the meaning than what has become the main tradition of interpretation.

Dines Johansen also makes a point of the fact that one cannot simply state that one meaning is more important than the other. He says that the meanings virtually fight for their positions in a work, but that they simultaneously fold themselves into each other (Ibid.). This is similar to Kittang's point where he claims that some parts of the text are expelled to its outskirts, and that this is of special interest to psychoanalysis.

Regarding a psychoanalytic take on literature, Kittang claims that a literary work is a cooperation between primary processes and secondary processes. These are psychoanalytic terms where primary processes refers to the logic of the unconscious, controlled by the pleasure principle (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988). The secondary process relates to an Aristotelian logic and organized rational thinking. This process is what contributes to making the text a readable and aesthetic whole. At the same time, the richness of these processes and their mutual tensions are kept in the text. Kittang writes: "Unconsciousness and consciousness, principle of lust and principle of reality, primary process and secondary process; the literary text is a dialectical play between these contradictory agencies or "powers":"⁴ (2003, p. 220.).

Here Kittang seems to be influenced by Ricoeur, who claims that psychoanalytically relevant phenomena consists of both *meaning* and *power* (1977). In scientific debates on psychoanalysis, this dialectical separation between *powers*, which connects the human being to nature, and *meaning*, which connects human being to hermeneutic processes, is emphasized.

⁴ Translation from Norwegian: «Undermedvit og medvit, lystprinsipp og realitetsprinsipp, primærprosess og sekundærprosess, den litterære teksten er et dialektisk spel mellom slike motstridande instansar eller «krefter»».

In literary analysis then, the question of how powers and meaning coexist in a work, becomes important. Powers, in Ricoeur's sense of the term, cannot be said to be present in the text *per se*. Powers of the kind Ricoeur postulates, one would through a psychoanalytic literary analysis find in Peer Gynt as a *dramatic person*. These powers are precisely what are pivotal to my analysis, especially in article one and three. There, I bring to the fore both a Kleinian *greed*, and a Kleinian *envy*, and these phenomena are highly dominated by "powers" in a psychoanalytic sense. But it is also a psychoanalytic premise that powers and meaning is closely interwoven. In a psychoanalytic view on literary analysis, I find it important to draw a distinction between what can be said to affect the work as a *text*, and what can be said to affect the *dramatic persons* as mimetic constructions.

Like André Green (1977a, p. 196), Kittang is concerned with the fact that literary analysis consists of untangling the bonds created by secondary processes. He claims that the text always

...speaks always more than the comprehensible voice of the secondary process. The task for the psychoanalytical interpreter is to untangle the bonds of the text by grabbing those fragments of text that not immediately allows themselves to be understood, thus gradually reading the text back to the phantasms which contain the real impulses of lust⁵. (Kittang, 2003, p. 220)

It almost seems here that Kittang suggests to read the text *back to* those impulses of lust that has created it, namely the writer's impulses. Whether or not this is a misreading, he certainly claims that one is to read the text *back to* earlier parts of the production process, or to those elements the text consists of, in a thematic sense. He thus recommends dissolving the bonds of the secondary process in order to reach the phantasms present in the text, which are underlying those bonds. The way I see it, one cannot perform this task without simultaneously dissolving the very structure of the work, since this structure presupposed these bonds. In danger of a misreading, I nevertheless find myself skeptical to this kind of view on literary analysis, found both in Green (1977a) and Kittang (2003).

Kittang also refers to Dines Johansen, who writes that an;

⁵ Translation from Norwegian: «taler alltid med meir enn sekundærprosessens forståelige røyst. Oppgåva for den psykoanalytiske tolkaren er å løyse opp tekstens bindingar ved å gripe tak i dei tekstelementa som ikkje umiddelbart lar seg forstå, og såleis gradvis lese teksten tilbake att til dei fantasma som rommer dei eigentlege lystimpulsane».

...operational, phantasmatic substrate in the literary process of production and its concrete deposition in the text's linguistic structure, makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the unconscious and conscious attractiveness that the reading holds, because it through identification engages the reading subject in a specific, sensuous and totalizing way, and one could say that it was not only the reader's head, but his whole imaginary body, which was activated⁶. (as cited in Kittang, 2003, p. 220)

Here we run into another point, namely that an "operational and phantasmatic substrate" is deposited in the structure of the language. This might be the case, but still revolves around matters that lie outside my project, since I have not focused on how the linguistic *structure* may or may not be carrying the themes I analyze. I consider these viewpoint to be a kind of structuralism, nourished by a view where psychoanalysis uses language as a scope and a premise. I am not located in that landscape, and relate to the fictional text in the same way as one who was not psychoanalytically inspired. This entails that I read the text straight forward, without an idea that it hides something, that something evades itself during the reading, or that the text wants to seduce me.

Kittang then writes that the work with dissolving the bonds made by the help of secondary processes, is to be done by gripping the fragments of text that does not immediately allow themselves to be understood (2003, p. 220). I agree with him here. And it might be reasonable to say, as both Kittang and Green does, that the psychoanalytical relevant elements is a result of *desire*, something that does not apply to other themes to the same degree. I have not focused my research on the production process of the text, so I simply leave this open.

Also Hannah Segal, one of Klein's colleagues, is concerned with what kind of dimensions in the psyche contributes to the production of art (1952). Briefly explained, she views creative processes as a part functioning of the depressive position. She considers art to be a process of reparation. I agree that the process of creation can seem reparative or healing, but I equally believe that art derives its material from the eruptive processes of the paranoid-schizoid position. The relationship between the positions, when it comes to contributing to creative

⁶ Translation from Norwegian: «driftsmæssig, fantasmatisk substrat i den litterære produktionsprosess og dets konkrete aflejringer i tekstens sproglige struktur, yder et væsentlig bidrag til forståelsen av den ubevidste og bevidste tiltrækningskraft som lesningen rummer, fordi den via identifikasjonen engagerer det læsende subjekt på en konkret, sensuel og totaliserende måte, man kunne si, at det ikke blot var den læsendes hoved, men hele hans imaginære kropp, som aktiveredes»

processes, has a lot in common with the relationship between primary and secondary processes. In other words, art is created through an interaction between chaotic and organizing powers. The role *desire* plays in this process, is beyond the scope of my project.

Several places in this thesis, I seek to grab fragments of text that does not immediately allow themselves to be understood. But for me, this is about how the ideas, which allow us to understand, were not developed enough to enable us to spot these "pockets of meaning", before Klein and Bion's ideas won grounds. This is a different view on psychoanalytically relevant phenomena than the one Kittang and Greenrepresent, if I understand them right. It is also about a difference between French and British psychoanalysis, and here I orient myself from the British point of view.

Another relevant question in psychoanalytic literary analysis is the question of *subtext*. *Peer Gynt* has a fractured and loose structure. The text twists and turns, and it may seem that what the trustworthy and the ominous are spoken equally as open, and without one being less accessible than the other is. Many (e.g. Rees, 2008) has pointed out this typical structure.

In my own account, I claim that the structure in *Peer Gynt* renders the premises for *subtext* different than in Ibsen's contemporary dramas. While the contemporary dramas tell a *completely different* and mainly *silent* and ominous story in their subtext, a trustworthy story is being told in the text itself. However, we are immediately captivated by the subtext. This was the inspiration for Freud, and it was these themes, which influenced his ideas of repression, conflict etc. I will claim that we do not find this silent, but intensely contributory story in *Peer Gynt*, as we find it in the contemporary dramas. Everything is spoken in a more explicit way, albeit by different dramatic means. Much of the ominous come to the fore in the shape of metaphores, fantastic figures, magical existences etc, but it is *made visible* or *said*. It is not underlying as another voice. The ominous story is as available, both for the reader and for Peer himself, as the cheerful story.

On a more speculative basis, I will claim that this is due to the fact that either the work, or the protagonist, establishes what Bion names a *contact barrier* (1962b). This kind of barrier regulates the traffic between the conscious and the unconscious. The barrier is analogue with a repression barrier, and it a premise for keeping two levels of meaning relatively separated as systems. In *Peer Gynt*, we cannot find this kind of dichotomy in the work itself, nor in the structure of the protagonist. This is a claim on my part, but it is worth discussing. I will also claim that this is a circumstance, which contributed to making the work less interesting for

Freud. First with the psychoanalysis that developed after Freud, other organizational principles came to the fore, principles central both to how *Peer Gynt* is constructed as a work, and to how Peer is constructed as a person. One of these principles are *splitting*, which has a central role in the first article.

The question of the structure of the text is relevant to the choice of method. I choose to read the work without a conscious choice of any kind of suspicious look, and without allowing myself to be inspired by a critical hermeneutics, which is often connected with a psychoanalytical literary analysis (Kittang, 1985, p. 176). In my choice of hermeneutic positioning, I try to read *with* the text, believing that it will tell me something *true* if I remain open to it. (Gadamer 1975/2010).

During the years this work of analysis has been going on, this openness has increasingly been governed by the theoretical position I have chosen (Klein and Bion). This position has in turn contributed both in opening up the text for new interpretations, and in limiting the focus and circling interpretations. Thus the circle of hermeneutics works, where one reads with a theoretical perspective: The work closes and opens, virtually in the same movement.

I have made a choice *not* to direct a suspicious look towards Ibsen's work. My suspicion I direct two other places: In part I am critical towards established interpretations, something that is evident in my articles, and in part I am suspicious towards myself and my own practice of interpretation. One of the central contributions of psychoanalysis has been to problematize the perceiving subject. This goes for both self-perception and for perception of matters outside oneself. All the processes psychoanalysis concerns itself with, goes on also in the interpretative subject. Thus, one does not only contribute to opening up the work, as I hope to do, but also inevitably to closing one's eyes to much else.

This is not only due to the choice of theoretical perspectives, but in greater degree to personal assumptions or pre-conditions. Green claims that one needs to have been through a psychoanalysis oneself to be able to perform a psychoanalytical literary analysis (1977a, p. 188). I by far agree with this. I have undergone analysis for many years, and I have personal experience with all the phenomena I write about in my research. This has without a doubt enabled me to notice things that normally are hard to spot, and can thusly be understood as a special competence. The deeply personal also makes out the first set of prejudices in Hans-Georg Gadamer's pre-understanding (1975/2010). As the hermeneutic circle's first source, it is imperative that these are *put to play*, something I have tried to do. The personal aspect is

also a possible source for misinterpretation of substantial character. In my chapter on method, I will justify how I seek to avoid subjective and projective errors.

To analyze a drama

I will give a short presentation of a general understanding of dramatic means, and relate it to my interpretation of *Peer Gynt*. I allow myself to make use of an introductory book, namely Helland and Wærp (2005), for this survey. The point is not to discuss or problematize the concepts, but to relate them to how I approach *Peer Gynt*. This is necessary because I am not analysing a *person*, as psychoanalysis is designed for. When analysing a dramatic poem, it is crucial to understand what constitutes a *written drama*, in difference from a *living person* or a *human psyche*. In short, to clarify the *object of research*.

Action and state

What is the relationship between *action* and *state*, and how does this relate to my concern? In Aristotle's Poetics, action is what constitutes a drama, with character as subordinated means.

However, in modern drama we find that the "unfolding of a state" takes precedence over the action. Over time, a change has taken place where a state-oriented drama take over for an action-oriented one. This change is not least reflected in Ibsen. Helland and Wærp write:

In the modern drama starting with Ibsen (...) the theme is shifted from interpersonal relationships to the subject and its inner life. The representation of the human condition, and the subject's inner state, now starts to compete with the representation of external action⁷ (2005, p. 55).

This dramaturgic development is highly relevant for my analysis of *Peer Gynt*, where I find that the action on one hand and the unfolding of a "subject's inner state" on the other, are closely interrelated. In my interpretation, I mainly consider the action as an expression of Peer's inner state. In regards to the meaning of the term "state", I have to add that internal states may be understood in several ways, not exclusively in a psychodynamic one.

Among Ibsen scholars, Peer's *state* is often considered to be of existential (e.g. Haakonsen, 1967) or Christian nature (e.g. Dvergsdal, 2003), and a Christian understanding of an inner state in turn implies that Peer is dominated by his sins. The term *state* itself refers to

⁷ Translation from Norwegian: "I den moderne dramatikken fra og med Ibsen (...) dreies det tematiske fokuset fra mellommenneskelige forhold til subjektet og dets indre. Framstillingen av menneskets tilstand, av subjektets indre tilstand, begynner nå å konkurrere med framstillingen av ytre handling "

something persistent (if not fixed), unlike emotions and moods. Most interpreters understand Peer's inner state as undeveloped in one way or another. This argument is in line with my project. It is crucial to my interpretation that I understand Peer's state primarily as *undeveloped*.

The next question at hand is what this undeveloped state consists of. And an even more crucial one; how it is expressed in the drama. An undeveloped state implies that the self, or the personality, is not fully developed. In an existentialistic view, this may be due to an absence of a decisive choice, in line with Kierkegaard. In a Christian understanding, the person has not confessed his sins and received forgiveness. Considerations like these underlie several interpretations of *Peer Gynt* (e.g. Groven Myhren, 1979).

Because my perspective is rooted in the theory of psychodynamics, the undeveloped state has to be understood in quite another way: The personality has been arrested at an unfinished stage of development, and the conditions for this arrest can be found in early childhood. Infantile processes survive into adult life because of their unsolved character. This point is the one that most clearly distinguishes a psychodynamic perspective from other perspectives of interpretation. Moreover, these infantile processes are thought to be unconscious ones. For that reason, they prove quite difficult to demonstrate in literature analysis, a point to which I will return.

In psychodynamic theories, the undeveloped state may be conceptualized in different ways. I have chosen Klein's paranoid schizoid position as a basis for my interpretation. This choice is due to my observation of the fact that both details and patterns in Klein's descriptions seem to correspond to the complex structure of *Peer Gynt*. Furthermore, Klein's positions are *processes*, thereby liable to change all the time, instead of being fixed stages. Because processes are exactly what is in focus in my reading of *Peer Gynt*, this is a crucial point to my analyses.

During the play, Peer moves back and forth between Klein's paranoid schizoid position and the next model: the depressive position. However, the depressive position as a possibility in Peer's mind, never does unfold itself fully. The result is that his self attains an undeveloped character. This arrest is caused by primitive defenses against mental pain. Peer seems to lack tolerance for mental pain, and is therefore unable to make a definitive move to the depressive position. The positions are not mere stages, although the transgression from one state to another implies maturation.

Thereby, they resemble Kierkegaard's first two stages (the esthetic and ethic ones). This point may partly explain why Klein's positions so easily fit the structure of *Peer Gynt*, which so often is interpreted in light of Kierkegaard (e.g. Groven Myhren, 1979). The main difference between Kierkegaard and Klein, as I see it, is that for Kierkegaard, the *constituting Other* seems to be of a religious kind. Further, that the split between good and evil also is largely of a religious kind. In addition, one gets the impression that Kierkegaard mainly refers to processes in the adult mind, with just a few allusions to infantile processes. The *processes* Kierkegaard describes and the *formal structures* of the relations involved, at least in the last part of *Either-Or* (1843), are in many ways similar to Klein, as I see it.

With basis in Bion's ideas, I consider the undeveloped state in yet another way, namely as an incomplete development of the ability to *learn from experience* (see article three). This concerns an inner state where thinking is not sufficiently developed to process emotions and sensations, especially frustrating and painful experiences. This deficit in Bion's theory is closely associated with Klein's paranoid-schizoid position. And that is precisely the reason I apply both Klein and Bion to interpret *Peer Gynt* in my thesis. The relation between the first two articles and the third, where I build on Bion, is not made clear in the articles. The connection has to do with the way undeveloped thoughts, in Bion's terms, are founded in unprocessed frustration characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position.

This condensed presentation shows that "unfolding of the subject's inner state" is a main feature of the modern drama. In addition, this is exactly where I anchor my interpretation of *Peer Gynt*. Hence, the next point I shall seek to clarify is how an inner state is expressed in a drama. The answer is; the inner condition is expressed in dialogues and monologues, in stage and person directions (from now on *side text*) and action. The combination of these dramatic instruments constitutes the basis for how I understand Peer's inner state. Therefore, side text, although it plays a restricted role in the work, are important to my analysis. It often indicates emotional reactions and states.

Psychodynamically, *inner state* is closely related to the psychoanalytic concept of *psychic reality*. The term was often used by Freud to designate what in the subject's psyche presents a consistency and resistance comparable to those displayed by material reality. So fundamentally, what is at stake here is unconscious desire and its associated phantasies (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988). Even if the psychic reality is dominated by the paranoid-schizoid position, this does not imply a categorization. Rather, it points to certain processes

that are active in the mind. An intra-psychoic state is by definition *dynamically active*. For instance, Klein's paranoid-schizoid position consists of elements ranging from intolerance to frustration and specific defence mechanisms. These represent inner actions with a tendency to be acted out. These are involved in dynamically active processes, which are expressed as textual processes in *Peer Gynt*. My interpretation of the bride-robbery as *acting out of a greedy desire* is based on such connections. Moreover, the interpretation is anchored several places in the text. The mechanism at work however, is acting out, and my conception of this mechanism is theoretically based.

In addition to the dramatic means *action* and *state*, a third term necessary to understand a drama, namely *event*. Event refers to something that happens, without being a direct result of people's intentions. Indeed, the concept of dramatic action covers both what happens and what people do by purpose. This means that events form a part of the dramatic action. In my approach to *Peer Gynt*, I aim to distinguish between the two. For example, the bride robbery is a consequence of Peer's own actions, while what happens in the Dovre-hall, or the madhouse in Cairo, could on the contrary be understood as not representing effects of Peer's own actions. Nevertheless, several scholars interpret these incidents as expressions of Peer's inner state (e.g. Østerud 1981). Consequently, modern drama has to be considered a complex interaction between action, state and events, where the state has come to the fore.

When Helland and Wærp claim that *character* subordinates to *action* in the modern drama, this requires an examination of Peer Gynt's *character*. In what follows, I will try to relate this discussion to the *character* Peer Gynt.

Peer Gynt as character

Fictional persons may well resemble real people, but they are something quite different. They are persons in terms of being constructed by linguistic structures. This duality is an essential feature of fictional persons, and has great significance for how we approach them analytically. As readers, we usually forget this and deal with them as real people. Hillis Miller says: "... it is equally as difficult to pay attention to the language of a fictional work, as studying the threads of a weave instead of focusing on the image it represents"⁸ (as cited in Helland and Wærp, 2005, p. 102). In conclusion, the complexity of a fictional person is something we must strive to maintain when we interpret a work.

⁸ Translation from Norwegian: "... det er like vanskelig å være oppmerksom på språket i et fiksjonsverk som å studere trådene i en bildevev istedenfor å fokusere på bildet den representerer"

This means that we as interpreters have to make a more sophisticated reading than regular readers do. Helland and Wærp discuss which concept is best suited to apply on fictional characters, and ends up with *dramatic person*. 'The dramatic person is the sum of all the characteristics said person gets through his or her gradual design in the drama'⁹.(2005, p. 104). This statement is important because it emphasizes that a fictional person does not have any characteristics independent of the text. All traits adhering to him, is due to a given textual representation. Since this presentation is sequential and action-oriented, the traits come *gradually into view*. This is a crucial characteristic of dramatic persons, and as such widely not recognized among psychoanalytic scholars when interpreting literary characters.

Many scholars claim that Freud violated these considerations in his analysis of Rebecca West. (Johnston, 2005, p. 54). He seems to treat Rebecca as a real person, and he does not understand that her features come gradually into view in the text. Brian Johnston is of the opinion that Freud did not pay sufficient respect to the point that he has to do with fictional characters, which comes to life sequentially through the text's construction.

From this background, it makes sense to reflect upon the *sequence* in which different aspects of *Peer Gynt*, relevant to my analysis, appear. The order plays a significant role in my interpretation of Peer's psychodynamics. It also plays a role in the way I consider Solveig's development. This order also controls the sequence in which my findings are presented in this thesis. In short, I am faithful to the chronology of *Peer Gynt*, although I do not analyse the entire play.

Psychodynamic theory operates with a nuanced set of concepts and classifications related to people's *character*. But no matter how much we elaborate on these concepts, they remain categories. It is useful to have this in mind when we employ these categories on dramatic persons. The system of concepts is not sufficiently nuanced to make any profile unique, and it can never be. Thus, it is easy to agree with Bjerck Hagen when he claims: Hamlet might well have an Oedipus complex, but does that contribute more to our understanding of the work? His answer is no (2014, p. 359).

A first delimitation against the pitfall Bjerck Hagen points to is underlining that my concern is not that Peer is caught in the paranoid schizoid position *per se*. My point is that processes associated with this position, turns out to play a crucial role in determining the main storyline

⁹ Translation from Norwegian "Den dramatiske personen er summen av de karakteristiske trekkene vedkommende får gjennom sin gradvise utforming i dramaet"

in *Peer Gynt*. My contribution is not to categorize the protagonist, as Bjerck Hagen warns us against, but to shed light to the storyline. Engelstad underlines the same point, when he claims that a relevant interpretation has to shed new light to the storyline (1985, p. 63).

Let us dwell on the dramatic person's signifying¹⁰ function in a drama. Peer's and Solveig's signifying functions are far more complex than my analysis can demonstrate. In my thesis, I consider Peer as one struggling to handle his undeveloped self, although it may appear more like escapism than struggle. And I consider Solveig as devised to serve a specific function vis-à-vis Peer's undeveloped self. This way to consider the relationship between the persons is in line with the interpretative tradition in general, at least the one dominating *Peer Gynt* research in the last century (e.g. Haakonsen, 1967, Bull, 1956). What is new in my interpretation is the way I understand the undeveloped self in Peer and the nature of Solveig's task in the drama.

Again, it becomes clear that my analysis shares structural similarities with many other *Peer Gynt* interpretations. What is new is primarily my specification of new content. This specification is based on several factors. One factor is the inclusion of yet more nuances to Ibsen's text. Another is that I am drilling deeper into the significance of single words. I try to do what Wright requests; to "move the text on to a new meaning, undermining its old power" (1998, p. 112), thereby allowing new meanings to emerge. The last factor is my choice to emphasize other elements in Peer's dialogues with the Dovre-King and The Lean Person, than one usually does. I move my eyes slightly sideways in Ibsen's text, when emphasizing what kind of *lye* the two are talking of. In this way, I allow new meanings to emerge. (see article two).

By further applying Helland's and Wærp's vocabulary to *Peer Gynt*, I see Solveig as a limited character, because she has few stable traits (2005, p. 105). At the same time, I consider her to be what the authors call "open and enigmatic¹¹". Again, I am the one to employ the dramatic concepts to *Peer Gynt*, not the authors. The open and enigmatic, and at the same time limited, character of Solveig sheds light to her relationship with Peer, and constitute the framework for my interpretation of her as a container. Within this framework, I note a number of interacting shades in Solveig's manners, nuances being expressed in the way she is open, enigmatic and limited at the same time (see article three).

¹⁰ Norwegian: meningsgivende

¹¹ Norwegian: åpen og gåtefull.

Dialogue, monologue and side text

In a drama, all lines have two senders; the dramatic person who puts the words forth, and the dramatist who lets him do it. All lines also have two receivers, namely the dialogue partner in the work, and the reader or the audience. This makes the speech more complex than in real life. In my analysis of *Peer Gynt*, I have considered this point. Occasionally, I note that the dramatist *makes* his protagonist respond or utter something. It is important to bear in mind that Peer is a construct, even though I do not always formulate this explicitly. Wright is in line with several psychoanalyst's when she, inspired by Winnicott, claims that dramatic persons are seated in a *potential space* (1998, p. 95)

Direct speech plays the lead in a drama, and there is a close relationship between speech and action. The lines are statements that affect the action. Therefore, we often characterize speech in a drama as performative, i.e. as a form for action.

After the Renaissance, it is interpersonal relations that are reflected in drama and no longer the relationship between man and God: "As a consequence of this, the dialogue, being the most important medium of the interpersonal, is exalted to an utterly central component of the drama"¹². (Helland and Wærp, 2005, p. 171). In light of this point, I choose to interpret the dialogue between Peer and other characters as expressions of interpersonal conditions, closely associated with the action of the play. And in light of the object relational theoretical perspective, to which Klein and Bion both belong, I emphasize the interpersonal terms as object relations. That means that relationships to other people are loaded with emotion and meaning, founded in the unconscious strata of the psyche. These relationships are formed in interaction with significant others, and in turn affect how other people are perceived. (Zachrisson, 2013b)

It is a crucial trait of psychoanalysis after Freud that the human urges are directed towards other persons, not just toward release. Therefore, I consider Peer's problematic drive-life as an expression of deeper relational problems of the kind that object relational theories are concerned with. Based on the same perspective, I consider Solveig's function as an "answer" to this issue, based on the same theoretical position, as developed by Bion. Hence, this is how I consider interpersonal conditions in my thesis. Early in life, these conditions are highly asymmetrical. This is in accordance with Solveig's and Peer's quite different statuses in my

¹² Translation from Norwegian: "Som en konsekvens av dette opphøyes dialogen, som er det mellommenneskelige viktigste språklige medium, til en helt sentral komponent i dramaet":

interpretation. In the course of the drama, Solveig assumes character of a function more than of a person, while Peer is understood as a person all the way.

Helland and Wærp further write that all speech in drama is called dialogue, while monologue is a subcategory of dialogue. The authors put it like this: “The monologue is often used ... to portray a dramatic person’s inner life”¹³. (2005, p. 165). In the monologue, only one is speaking, and the speaker can talk to himself or to the public. Furthermore, the authors note that a monologue allows the dramatist to portray a dramatic person's inner life, in the form of thoughts and feelings.

Peer is often talking to himself, and he reacts to his own voice as if it belonged to another person. It is a characteristic trait that what he says often surprise him, and thus brings his associations in new directions. The Ibsen scholar Sara Jan has analysed this aspect of Peer’s monologue and anchored it in Bakhtin's dialogism (Jan, 2006, p. 42).

Several times, I base my interpretations in such monologues by Peer, and often in unexpected shifts in his thoughts. This is for instance the case when I interpret the word *remorse* in article two. Peer has halted outside his cottage because an old witch has just appeared. Leaning on Helland and Wærp, I put forward as a premise that the monologue can be understood as an expression of Peer's inner life. I then interpret the shifts in Peer’s thoughts as an emerging recognition of depressive phenomena, taking place in his associations. This interpretation also finds support in the way dictionaries explicate the Norwegian word “anger”. I have now revised some key traits of what constitutes a drama, and tried to relate it to my analysis of *Peer Gynt*.

Translation

It is necessary to discuss briefly how the problem of translating a work like *Peer Gynt* to English, affects my analysis. It took twenty-five years for *Peer Gynt*, first published in 1867, to be published in Britain (Smidt 2000). The first translation was by William and Charles Archer in 1892. Since 1892, translations into English have proliferated. Smidt has traced and examined 19 different versions (up to 2000), from which he regards 12 as acceptable for a general reader. However, Smidt has found no one translation that deserves complete approval. Since that time, the list is supplemented by at least two new translations.

¹³Translation from Norwegian: "Monologen brukes (...) ofte til å framstille en dramatisk persons indre»

Since the entire analysis is based on a meticulously close reading of the text, the meaning of words and phrases are decisive. I am dealing here a problem of translation, since I primarily interpret the work in Norwegian, and then present this interpretation in English. This entails that in order to communicate with the international reader; I have to establish the interpretations in an English translation of the play as well, although all excerpts are presented in both English and Norwegian. To this day, no English translation does Ibsen's work justice. All existing translations are compromises in rendering meaning, rhyme and rhythm, which is unavoidable when translating a dramatic poem. In addition, the translators do not always understand the words and phrases properly (Smidt, 2000). We find examples of this in all translations.

Groddeck, who interprets *Peer Gynt* on a psychoanalytic basis, claims that many of the subtle connotations to the unconscious get lost in translation (1967). He writes:

This count especially for the ones, which interest us the most, for example the ones connected with choice of words and the finer nuances of expression. Nuances which Norwegian readers will understand immediately, but which the foreigner just can't reach, no matter how persistent they study the language.¹⁴ (p. 95).

I attach great importance to the word's meaning and check dictionaries that cover languages of Ibsen's own time, especially ODS (*Ordbog over det danske Sprog*). For Ibsen is known for playing upon many meanings of the words. He mixed Danish language, which was prevailing at the time, with special and local Norwegian expressions (Smidt, 2000). He also drew on Swedish and other languages. When these ambiguous words are translated into English, some of the multiple shades of meaning are lost and new ones added. Consequently, my interpretations are weakened in all English editions.

A particular point is that I focus on the *emotional* and *processual*¹⁵ aspects of single words. I have emphasized that some words contain meanings justifying religious interpretations, and at the same time holds the seeds of psychodynamic meanings, which are the ones I seek to uncover. This is particularly relevant for article 2, where I place great emphasis on the wide

¹⁴ Translation from Norwegian: «Det gjelder særlig dem vi er mest interessert i, for eksempel dem som er knyttet til ordvalg og finere nyanser i uttrykksmåten. Nyanser som norske lesere oppfatter uten videre, men som utlendinger ikke kan få tak i, samme hvor iherdig de studerer språket.»

¹⁵ Norwegian: prosessuelle.

range of meanings in such words as "sigh" and "remorse." Smidt underlines that the ambiguity is just what is displaced in translations of *Peer Gynt*.

My choice fell on using Archers' translation for this thesis (1907ed.). The translation offers the best match, given my excerpts. Smidt writes that most subsequent translations largely rely on Archers', a point that I will suggest strengthens my choice. "But the Archers are after all at the head of all English *Peer Gynt* translations and have the virtue of a reasonably good first-hand understanding of Ibsen's Norwegian and of his versification." (Smidt, 2000, p. 20). Unless chiefly looking for literal accuracy, as I do, Archer would not be the first choice due to a good deal of stiffness and archaism in his translation.

I have based the analytic work on Ibsen's original Norwegian text (1867/2007). A few times, Archer's choice of English equivalents have provided input for a richer interpretation, but it has no decisive significance for the totality of interpretations. For example, his translation of "nøster" to "thread-balls" led me onto the idea that Solveig might produce "thought-threads" at her spinning wheel (see article three). Such an interpretation, which is partly based on the English translation, can build on yet other interpretations, but must be seen as purely tentative. The interpretations, on which I rely, ought to be solidly founded in Ibsen's original Norwegian text.

Method

In this paper, a dramatic poem and psychoanalytic theory are related to each other in certain ways. I have until now accounted for some views on the relation between the two. I will now account for how I have tried to constitute this relation in my practical work with *Peer Gynt*. First, I have to point out some pitfalls to be aware of, pitfalls which are difficult to avoid completely.

The problem of projection, and of using theory as a magnet

I will mention a few issues to be aware of in literature analysis. The first I call the problem of *using theory as a magnet*. It involves traversing a literary work with a set of concepts acting as a magnet, and hence only attracting text fragments coinciding with the terms. In some ways, my second paper may be characterized by such a methodology, because I have searched for distinct themes. Nevertheless, when I still do not consider that to be an essential weakness, it is because I manage to include the findings in a more comprehensive context, related to issues in the other two articles.

The other issue we have to be aware of has been called the *problem of projection*¹⁶ (Greve, 2008, p. 120). Anniken Greve writes that the main epistemological challenge for a methodology for literary interpretation can be formulated as follows:

How are we to prevent that perceptions, thoughts and interests that we have previously had will control the reading process so that we cannot perceive what it says, but on the contrary project into it either our own thoughts and ideas or thoughts and ideas we have come into touch with prior to the actual reading of the text?¹⁷ (2008, p. 119-120)

Greve further refers to Gadamer's hermeneutics, where the concept of pre-understanding is central. We have to follow some guidelines of action in this world of meaning when we interpret texts. She writes that we must try to approach the text in ways that prevent that our eager to project dominates the work of interpretation. (Ibid p. 121).

Greve also cites Bultmann in order to point out a basic premise in all research as well as in literature:

The question whether an exegesis without presuppositions is possible, must be able to be answered with a yes, if one by 'without presuppositions' means: without the result of the exegesis being provided priorly. In this sense, an exegesis without presuppositions is not only possible, but also required. In another sense, it is most likely that no exegesis can be completely without presuppositions, since the exegete is no *tabula rasa*, but rather goes to the text with specific questions, and with a distinct idea about what the text is about.¹⁸ (Bultmann as cited in Greve, 2008, p. 122-123)

I try to balance these challenges through a variety of reading strategies. One is a meticulous and close reading. The second is the use of dictionaries to examine the shades of meaning of crucial words and phrases in use in Ibsen's time. Thirdly, I take my starting point in already

¹⁶ Norwegian: projiseringsproblemet

¹⁷ Translation from Norwegian: «Hvordan skal vi forhindre at det vi på forhånd har av oppfatninger, tanker og interesserer, skal styre leseprosessen slik at vi ikke oppfatter hva den sier, men tvert imot projiserer inn i den enten våre egne tanker og ideer eller tanker og ideer som vi har kommet i kontakt med uavhengig av og forut for lesningen av teksten?»

¹⁸ Hedda Solberg Rui's translation from Norwegian: «Spørsmålet om forutsetningsløs eksegese er mulig, må kunne bli besvart med et ja, hvis man med 'forutsetningsløs' mener: uten at eksegesens resultat blir forutsatt. I denne betydning er forutsetningsløs eksegese ikke bare mulig, men påkrevd. I en annen betydning er sannsynligvis ingen eksegese forutsetningsløs, da eksegeten ikke er noen *tabula rasa*, men snarere går til teksten med bestemte spørsmål, og med en sikker forestilling om saken som teksten handler om.»

established interpretations, seeking to drill deeper into the items. My ambition has been to have these three strategies working together.

A meticulous and close reading means that I read the text slowly over and over again. I have used this method throughout the entire study. Use of dictionaries are particularly important in article two, where I try to show that psychodynamic meanings of words relevant to Klein's depressive position (notably *sigh* and *remorse*) are built into the religious and ethical meanings. It seems to me that the psychodynamic meanings are in an embryo position in Ibsen's work. I have made efforts to make this point evident, particularly in article two.

When it comes to the third point of taking established interpretations as a starting point, I employ that strategy in all the three articles, but in different ways. Based on the known interpretations, I try to drill deeper into the text in focus. In this way, I reveal something new. Several of my interpretations have the same formal structure as well-established interpretations. By juxtaposing them with other text elements, or interpreting them in a new way, I specify content in the formal structure, which is already established. And this content points out new directions for understanding the work. It is the content that points beyond Freud's psychoanalysis, and first gets resonance in object relations theory. This method is most obvious in my interpretation of the last scene (see article three).

The formal features of my interpretation of the last scene can be found in many analyzes (e.g. Dvergsdal 2003). By putting the work in a hermeneutic interaction with Bion's ideas, the content becomes specified in a new direction, while the formal structure (the theme of human becoming) is maintained. I discuss this example in more detail elsewhere in the introduction.

Similarly, I challenge established interpretations when I examine why Peer has to leave Solveig in the third act (themed in article one and two). In this example, I do not consider the structure of existing interpretations as parallel to my own, but oppose the *normative* understanding that is inherent in many of them (e.g. Groven Myhren, 1979). They claim that Peer *should not* have left Solveig, but stayed with her to become a *fulfilled self* (article one). In my view, this is not a legitimate literature analysis. With normative intentions, it is very easy to overlook crucial text elements. I will oppose attempts at measuring the protagonist's acts against something he should have done. I limit myself to put weight on what Ibsen actually lets him do.

A third example of how I avoid projecting my theoretical platform onto *Peer Gynt*, is the way I base my interpretations on many aspects of Ibsen's text at the same time. For instance, I anchor my interpretation of Peer's motive for the bride robbery as an expression of Kleinian *greed*, in a number of scenes. Furthermore, I take as my point of departure the common understanding of Peer's bride robbery as basically motivated by sexual urge - what I call *desire* in the articles. By tracking how the desire moves through the play, we can get our eyes set on its character. And that is what I have tried to do in the first article. In a psychoanalytic view, the structure of desire and unconscious motivation are to sides of one coin. Through the dramatic instruments; dialogue, side text and storyline, I try to show the nature of Peer's desire as it unfolds in the work.

The next sequence consists primarily of my own reflections in retrospect on how I have performed my work.

Focus on associations

I focus my close reading of the work in a specific way, by following what I have called the associations in the text (article one). This means that I emphasize the connection between elements spoken or happening straight after each other, and I emphasize the sequential order. This means that I could not have gone the opposite way and brought to light the same meaning. It seems self-evident, but needs to be pointed out because several interpreters demonstrate contradictory traits in Peer's and Åse's reactions, without taking into consideration in what *sequence* the contradictions occur (e.g. Bull, 1956, Brynhildsvoll, 2002). Sequence is crucial for a psychodynamic interpretation, with focuses on how one meaning gives birth to the next (see article one).

This understanding of associations applies both to the meaning of words and to emotional reactions. I have attempted to elaborate such a focus as a distinct method, treating what is said and what happens in immediate sequence as semantically associated, in a manner similar to how associations are used in psychoanalytic treatment. This point is thoroughly explained in article one.

Moreover, focus on associations as a method, apply as much to side texts as to the main text of a drama. Reactions of characters can often be found in side texts. To give an illustration of how I have worked, I will anticipate one aspect of my interpretation of Peer's *werewolf fantasy* (article one). Ibsen concludes the text in the following way:

<p>jeg skal bide dig over Lænder og Rygg -- <i>(slaar med engang om og beder som i Angst)</i> Dans med mig, Solvejg! SOLVEJG <i>ser mørkt paa ham</i> Nu var du stygg. <i>(Gaar ind i Stuen)</i> (Ibsen [1867] 2007, p. 523)</p>	<p>I'll bite you all over the loins and the back -- [Suddenly changes his tone, and entreats her as if in dread] Dance with me, lass! SOLVEIG. [Looking darkly at him]. You were ugly then. [Goes into the house] (Ibsen [1867] 1907, p. 45)</p>
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That Peer «suddenly changes his tone» («slaar om» as Ibsen writes) indicates a sudden change of mode. I understand this sudden change as a reaction in Peer based on what he just said. The change in his mode might be motivated by something without any direct connection to what happens immediately before, but it seems like the elements as related to each other. In this respect, my way of using associations implies a kind of causal order of the text elements. One text element is influencing and controlling the shaping of the next. Notably, this does not concern what happens in Ibsen's mind, but what Ibsen lets happen to his characters. This focus implies a general understanding of text elements, which I specify in a psychoanalytic way.

In my interpretation, both Solveig, Peer and mother Åse get scared of something happening inside themselves (article one). Such considerations are central in legitimizing psychoanalytical interpretations of a work. In this respect, method and theoretical perspective are closely connected. Psychoanalytic concepts and theories primarily concern what happens in the mind of people, with primacy in their unconscious fantasies and processes, and expressed in emotional reactions and defences against these. In conclusion, the reactions one gets in interaction with other people, primarily concern what is *induced in oneself*. These reactions are mainly beyond conscious control. They just happen.

What's more, such intrapsychic causal relations – which in my interpretation are underlying Peer's sudden shifts - may concern something scary or potentially painful taking place inside oneself. Here the concept of *psychic defences* come into play. Defences play a central role in the psychodynamic understanding of associative movements.

Focus on side text

Now we run into fundamental methodological problems in psychoanalytic literature analysis. How can we maintain that something happening inside a literary character is *unconscious* and something else is conscious? This is not easy to legitimize, especially because the unconscious cannot be grasped until it is expressed in one way or another. When Peer for instance presents his werewolf fantasy, my claim is that it wells out of an unconscious layer in Peer's mind; even from a layer that to Klein is the primal source of psychic reality, *unconscious phantasy*¹⁹ (1946).

Concerning the question of what is unconscious, Kittang writes: "How does one go about collecting unconscious ideas from a text, in other words; giving words to the "unspoken" which the text speaks?"²⁰" (2003, p. 222). As pointed out earlier in this introduction, I do not focus on the *unspoken*, and I place all processes, including the unconscious ones, in what the text *openly tells*. However, what I claim to be unconscious must be interpreted, and I shall say a few words about how I do that in the mentioned case.

Here, I put great emphasis on what we find in the side texts. It is in a side text that Peer "slaar om I Angst." Thus, we receive dual information with help of the side text; both that his *feeling* state suddenly *changes*, and that it is associated with *anxiety*. The information about what kind of feeling he gets is a decisive indication of how the change can be interpreted. This applies to the fact that this notion is ascribed meaning, what kind of meaning is attributed to it, and that the reactions are assumed to be caused by unconscious factors. When this pattern is interpreted in light of Klein, some premises are added. In this case, what is expressed in Peer's fantasy seems to stem from his unconscious.

Not all readers will accept this way of interpreting Peer's sudden shifts. However, a close look at *Peer Gynt* reveals that it is dominated by inversion and turns, both in the way Ibsen lets Peer react, and in the way he has composed the work. Ellen Rees (2008) claims that Peer's turns and twists are *not* to be understood as carrying hidden meanings of the kind I am suggesting. Instead, she regards his desire as similar to a rhizome. This figure she retrieves from Deleuze, who is referring to the tendency of desire to change direction when it encounters an obstacle (Ibid.). Treated as a *formal structure*, all of Peer's shifts may be

¹⁹ Except from here, where I use a *conception*, I write fantasy with «f» in this introduction.

²⁰ Translation from Norwegian: "Korleis kan ein gå fram for å hente umedvitne førestillingar ut av ein tekst, dvs. gi ord til det «usagde» under det som teksten sier?"

considered the way she suggests, but I try to capture the *nature of the hindrance*. An activation of anxiety can very well be understood as an obstacle. Such a state of emotion represents a barrier for continuing unabated in the direction one was heading. My concern is to understand the content and the dynamics of such obstacles, and to see which context they can be said to belong.

In the second article, I interpret Peer's emotional reactions to mother Åse at her deathbed. These reactions are outlined in the side text, indicating that something difficult is underway in his mind (article two). Standing alone, such use of side text is not original. My contribution consists in how I relate Peer's *guilt* towards his mother, to his greedy attack on the mother object, as was expressed in my interpretation of the bride-robbery. By connecting these incidences, a psychodynamic understanding of guilt emerges. Such an interpretation is not only embedded in what happens sequentially, it is also based in yet another aspect of my methodology, namely in *causality*.

Focus on causality

That the action of a drama is characterized by causal relationships is central to the understanding of any drama. One action leads to the next, driven forward by events and motives. Gradually, something happens as an inevitable result of causal conditions, and this sequence establishes the drama. In Oedipus for example, Oedipus' urge to avoid the fulfillment of a prophecy acts as a primary motive in the drama. Had it not been for this motive, the fatal sequence of events would not have taken place. In article one, I account for my reasons to put a causal connection between Peer's werewolf fantasy (in the first act), and the death of Åse (in the third act).

Unlike Oedipus, who deliberately sought to avoid fulfilling the prophecy, Peer is, in my interpretation, almost entirely controlled by unconscious intentions in dealing with his challenges. This makes it more difficult to interpret Peer's motivational structure, than is the case for Oedipus. Nevertheless, many readers interpret the drama of *King Oedipus* as motivated by unconscious mechanisms (Zachrisson, 2013a).

Focus on sequence

One last element in the use of associations as a method is the emphasis put on *sequence*. Several of the elements I analyse acquire their meaning precisely from the sequence in which they appear. In my view, the sequence is crucial to get sight of the psychodynamics. I have explicated the issue elsewhere in this introduction.

Focus on below and above, as well as on infiltration

In Peers meeting with the seter girls, I emphasize that some emotions or tendencies are located *above* and others are located *beneath* within the psyche (article two). I will give the premises for such an interpretation. I claim for example that one of the seter girls perceives an underlying dead and undeveloped quality belonging to Peer's desire. This means that I put a topographic premise for the interpretation. Another premise is that some tendencies serve as defences against other tendencies. Hence, the discrimination of conscious and unconscious levels is not the point here. On the contrary, Peer easily recognizes the qualities in the complex image.

My interpretation of Peer's encounter with the seter girls is partly founded in his own description of where in the body the various tendencies are seated. That sadness located in the chest and the sobs in the throat are typical localizations of feelings, while a frisky thought and a glance full of laughter can be understood as defences against the pain of sorrow.

This understanding is based on the defence's way to operate, according to Klein (1946). For her, denial serves as a core category, and omnipotent, manic and magical manoeuvres serve as subcategories in the primitive defence system. This means that the merry feelings themselves do not represent a problem. However, when Peer chooses to follow these tendencies in an omnipotent and exaggerated way, we may interpret his choice as a defence. The defences are directed against feelings in the chest and the throat. The interpretation of this emotional paradox is rooted in Peer's own association from "dead children's eyes from a black pond". According to the text, these opposite tendencies are active simultaneously.

It is thus reasonable to ask what happens to his sadness and his urge to cry when Peer chooses an omnipotent drive discharge by having sex with three girls simultaneously. I connect this scene to one in the last act, where tears are accusing him of having lost their power (article two). Peer has violated the healing power of the tears. This point has been observed before (e.g. Hammer, 2000). What may be new here is the more complex meaning emerging from my perspective; Peer is defending against the pains inherent in the depressive position. He is not, at this point, able to take that step of development.

Moreover, I interpret the sad feelings as *infiltrating* his exaggerated and omnipotent desire. So what we are dealing with here is both about an infiltration of sadness into his drive life, and at the same time about how the laughter and wantonness serve to distance Peer from his

feelings. Here, I perform a complex interpretation with distinct theoretical premises, namely that defenses counteract the entry of depressive phenomena into consciousness.

Also playing a central part in my interpretation of Peer's werewolf fantasy is *infiltration*. The aggressive greed expressed in the fantasy seems to infiltrate Peer's relation to Solveig. His interaction with her in the first act is infiltrated with forces from the paranoid schizoid position. In his encounter with the seter girls in the second act, depressive phenomena infiltrate his desire. Therefore, infiltration is a key concept in understanding how Klein's two positions act in the mind. The drive has an object, an *addressee*. The addressee for Peer is, in my view, his mother. This relation plays a significant role in forming his desire and in determining the state of his feelings. The work of infiltration also sheds some light on why it is so imperative to defend oneself against these feelings, which appear strange, unwanted and disturbing.

Focus on simultaneity and contiguity

Several times Ibsen writes "I det samme/at the same moment". He lets two separate actions appear in exactly the same moment, or straight after one another. This means that they take place in parallel realms or without interspaces. Actions without interspaces may be considered an action-variant of associations: One action immediately leads to the second, apparently from an inner necessity. It is this *inner necessity* that I interpret in psychodynamic terms.

In the scene where Solveig arrives at Peer's hut in the forest, Ibsen makes use of this dramatic mean in two different ways (article one and two). In the side text, we read that the old witch emerges "at the same moment" Peer goes to chop wood. And the witch claims that her hut was built *at the same time* as Peer built his. My interpretation is based on this simultaneity, understood as parallel processes, i.e. construction of cottages with a symbolic character, the witch's cabin being built with the very material that Peer is trying to block out of his building. There is an additional point: these phenomena activate each other. Peer's acceptance of Solveig activates the witch. I interpret this complex simultaneity as splitting in a Kleinian sense.

Unlike the scene with the seter girls, where the interpretation is more dependent on theory, the scene outside Peer's cabin contains all elements necessary to form an understanding, as nothing needs to be added from theory. This kind of scene is what makes it reasonable to argue that the pattern I claim to read is firmly rooted in Ibsen's text. This is the literary scholar Greve's point when she underlines that an interpretation is to be preferred over others if said

interpretation can maintain itself without the help of theory (Greve, 2008, p. 123). When we manage to show the logic of Ibsen's text independent of theory, it serves to underline that the interpretation is not projected into the work, but rather emerges from the text.

Focusing certain segments of the work

In article three, I focus certain parts of the work, mainly from the fifth act, a choice I justify in the structure of *Peer Gynt*. Peer can be said to unfold his personality, and thereby its psychodynamics, in the first four acts. In the fifth act, he is confronted by his *psychic reality* that underlies and presupposes this unfolding. This delimitation represents per se an interpretation of the work's structure. Again, my aim is to interpret a widely accepted structure, in a psychodynamic direction.

In all the articles, I focus on a particular segment of the work, namely the psychoanalytical. In the third article, this segment is understood partly as Peer's psychic reality and partly as the abilities or capacities, Solveig develops to receive Peer *mentally*.

When I say that psychoanalysis constitutes a *segment* of the work, I am indicating two points. First, I focus only on selected parts of the work's complexity of themes. Therefore, it is essential how I then treat the omitted elements. Where I, for example, touch upon a religious theme, I explicitly state that I only interpret the emotional, relational and/or processual aspects of words and scenes. I omit the Christian meaning, but try to pay respect to it in order to avoid reductionism. This applies to other themes as well, for instance do I omit Ibsen's irony, and his criticism of contemporary life in the fourth act. Even though one may question my choice, my interpretations rely on scenes where the seriousness does not seem to be abolished by irony.

When I use the word segment, it also plays on *stratification* as a secondary meaning. That means that I am implying stratification in my understanding of the thematic structure. Such stratification is crucial in a psychodynamic understanding of a work. The layers may be conceptualized in different ways, and I will try to clarify how I understand this issue. Stratification can immediately be associated to two types of text working together; a sub-text or latent text, and a manifest text. In this sense, the subtext is seen as bearer of the unconscious and, from a psychodynamic point of view, the real meaning (Gullestad & Killingmo, 2005).

Such considerations are underlying in Kittang's advice to read the text almost as a symptom, which is both hiding and revealing the real meaning. This is exactly how the symptom is considered in psychoanalytic theory. To reveal hidden meaning by interpreting through the different layers becomes the task.

Somewhere else in this introduction, I have explained why I do not see my work in this way, and I am not referring to this kind of stratification when I use the word segment. Of course, psychodynamic phenomena mainly have unconscious sources, lying behind or beneath the consciousness. My aim is to identify what may be understood as psychodynamic aspects of the work. And I do that without considering the text itself as a structure of different layers. I have explicated my way of reading Ibsen's text elsewhere. I will also refer to Lionel Trilling, who calls the psychoanalytic relevant ideas, expressed in literature, "dark poetry" (as cited in Bjerck Hagen, 2014, p. 360). Although he does not speak explicitly about *Peer Gynt*, this label has inspired me.

Themes and findings

Here, I shall briefly outline the themes of each article, and then provide an overview of the findings.

Article one:

The structure of desire in *Peer Gynt*'s relationship to Solveig. A reading inspired by Melanie Klein *Ibsen Studies*, 13:2, 130-160, 2013 [doi: 10.1080/15021866.2013.849029](https://doi.org/10.1080/15021866.2013.849029) (co-author A Zachrisson)

Article two:

Tears, remorse and reparation in Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. A reading inspired by Melanie Klein *The Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review*. 37:113-124.
doi.org/10.1080/01062301.2014.962323 (sole author)

Article three:

Stray thoughts – seeking home, Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* read in light of Wilfred Bion's ideas. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. 2015. doi: 10.1111/1745-8315.12440 (sole author)

Article one. Theme: Desire and splitting

The central theme in the first article is twofold: One part is about Peers structure of desire, interpreted as greed. The other concerns Peer's split mother representation. The themes are intimately connected. They constitute the two central features of Klein's *paranoid-schizoid position* (1957). In my analysis of *Peer Gynt*, the first topic is how Peer's desire is organized in his mind. I interpret this structure of desire as greed in a Kleinian sense. Peer is attacking what he needs to become a developed person. This form of desire prevents him from relating to someone in love, and from being integrated as a person.

The dynamics of this greedy desire, marked by an attacking combined with anxiety of own aggression and primitive attempts at reparation, has a sequential character where the order is essential for the interpretation. I understand the anxiety Peer is struck by after telling Solveig the werewolf impulse, as a reaction to the greedy attack. Even more, it is a point that this same dynamics underlies the bride-robbery, which seriously befalls mother Åse. The fact that mother Åse is affected in a way that matches Klein's description of this dynamics - the fate of the target for greedy desire - clearly supports my interpretation.

The second main theme is Peer's split representations of women: Solveig and The Green Woman. I have tried to show that they represent the front and backside of a coin twisting and turning in the Peer's mind. Taken together, the dynamics of greed and splitting account for the central themes in Klein's paranoid-schizoid position and thereby, they represent the two central disintegrating tendencies in the psyche.

Relevant concepts

The core concepts of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position are extensively presented in article one. Here I will just make a few explications referring to Kristeva, who has written a biography of Klein (2000/2001).

I have chosen, as Kristeva does, to talk about desire where Klein is talking about instinct. Therefore, it is reasonable with a demarcation. In French psychoanalysis, they draw a distinction between need and desire. Need has to be satisfied in order to promote mental development. Desire contributes to developing the psyche by not being fully satisfied (Dines Johansen, 1977b, p. 17).

I will add that when I substitute desire for Klein's instinct, it does not mean that I follow the French conception fully. To Klein, the desire, whether it is called one thing or another, is a

natural phenomenon that works intrudingly and forms part of destructive mechanisms if it is not satisfied. This means that frustrated desire does not develop the psyche in the first place. And this is the kind of desire I illuminate in the first article. In the second article, the theme is how healing powers of tears and remorse seem to be directed towards the damage caused by these forces.

Kristeva also underlines the primary role of anxiety in Klein's theory. The frustrated desire of the immature child creates anxiety, which in turn activates an attack on the mother-object. Further, this attack reinforces the anxiety. In a vicious circle of wounds and counterattacks, the object turns useless in the internalization process. Therefore, it is split off, and in my interpretation, The Green Woman represents this part. Kristeva notes that the attacks caused by frustrated desire creates a *wound* in the psyche (2000/2001, p. 83). I do not find the word wound used in this way in Klein's writings. So, the use of this concept represents an interpretation of Klein, applied in the opening of the second article. There, we find Peer's description of his devalued self as subject to something "saart og hvasst". Supported by Kristeva, I attribute Peer's expression to feelings to the paranoid-schizoid position (Ibid.). The other interpretations in the first two articles are based directly on Klein's own thinking.

Article two. Theme: Mourning, guilt and reparation

In article two, the central theme is the *reparative forces* in the mind. Notably, it is about forces in Peer's mind, not those Solveig or "higher powers" have at their disposal (forgiveness, grace etc, and in my interpretation in the third article; containment). Relevant to this theme are phenomena like tears, sadness, mourning, guilt and remorse. I have tried to show that these phenomena, as Ibsen has dramatized them, serve a function in repairing and developing the personality.

This article is written as an extension of the first, and the two are meant to form a whole. Since the theme is so comprehensive, I had to write and publish them separately, in entirely different journals. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that the mourning and guilt focused upon in the second article, is in a reparative way directed towards Peer's personality deficiency, as it is presented in the first article.

It is a theoretical premise in Klein's thinking that grief and guilt are processual phenomena, i.e. that they have a *reparative effect* on something in the psyche that is damaged or undeveloped, and that this processing takes time. A further premise is that processing is

associated with mental pain, and that a successful process therefore assumes that the person can abide mental pain over time.

It is also a premise that in the paranoid–schizoid position, the ability to endure mental pain is severely limited. Instead, primitive defences against mental pain dominate, robbing the reparative phenomena of their power. In my article, I show how this dynamics applies to Peer.

Relevant concepts

The theoretical basis for this article is Klein's notion of the *depressive position*, with its emphasis on how mourning and guilt can repair damages of the internalized maternal object (1935). The mother object remains in an insufficiently internalized position because of damages caused by greed and splitting. A partially internalized maternal object may protect against breakdown in psychosis, but it cannot contribute to developing the personality further.

According to Klein, depressive phenomena tend to intrude into consciousness because they belong to the psyche's natural endowment.

Klein's idea of reparation through a mourning characterized by guilt contains several elements. First, it is necessary to strip the maternal object of an idealization serving as protection against frustrating experiences. Frustration activates rage, and the frustrating object is split off, denied, and paralleled with an idealized object. De-idealizing implies that the painful split off parts gradually decrease in power. Over time, the two split parts can be integrated. *Time* is a crucial importance in this integration.

Klein is also concerned with a *longing* for the maternal object, which in her opinion plays a part of depressive phenomena. Occasionally she calls this longing *pining* (1940). The wording is due to the point that a yearning for a damaged maternal object is associated with mental pain. If the depressive position is allowed to operate, an ability to suffer will gradually take the place of an intolerable mental state. If, on the other hand, paranoid-schizoid phenomena are too dominant, the suffering will not be tolerated, and phenomena of the depressive position will have no effect. Instead, this will consolidate the arrest of the personality at an immature stage of development.

How to understand the sequence of mourning and guilt in Klein's thinking remains an open question; if guilt comes before mourning, developmentally, whether it is vice versa or whether the two concepts are merged in her thinking (Spillius, Milton, Garvey, Couve and Steiner, 2011, p. 312). It anyhow seems to be the case that the sorrow is directed against loss, whereas

guilt is directed at the damage one has inflicted on the maternal object. A word like *remorse*, which plays a major role in my analysis, combines these two dimensions and is used by Klein in her early observations of depressive phenomena (1935). It is these observations that Kristeva emphasizes in her outline of Klein's theory (2000/2001). I rely largely on Klein's early descriptions of her discoveries, and not on the outline which she later presents in *Envy and gratitude* (1957).

Article three. Theme: Disturbed thinking and containment.

The theme of the third article is twofold, but the two issues are intimately associated. The first theme considers a distinct disturbance in Peer's way of using *thinking* in learning from experience. I interpret this in the light of Bion. In addition, I have mainly focused on the theme as we encounter it in the fifth act, though it also can be traced all throughout the work. The delimitation is primarily due to the limited format of the paper. The substance of this article proved to be at least as comprehensive as the substance of the first two articles together.

That means that I have been forced to omit many relevant passages in the text that could have enriched the analysis. However, the delimitation also has another meaning behind it. I argue that Ibsen allows his protagonist to unfold his personality structure in the first four acts, while this structure is confronted and uncovered in the last act. Therefore, I have mainly focused on what is revealed, and I have done it in the perspective of Bion's ideas.

To understand the process that Ibsen unfolds in the fifth act as expressions of Peer's own self, is not controversial. However, in line with my psychodynamic perspective, I call the material that is uncovered, Peer's *psychic reality*. This involves a theoretical premise for the understanding, which I do not find in other interpreters.

The first element I want to underline is Peer's inability to use thinking as a basis for self-knowledge. This is particularly evident in his reflections, and to metaphors like *the pyramid* and *rolling balls*. This undeveloped state is crucial to my interpretation.

Solveig's development into a container in Bion's sense forms the second part of the theme in the third article. The two themes are closely related. In light of Bion's thinking, Solveig's apparent passivity is transformed to an active stance. She displays a development of receptive qualities of an active kind. That the *time* seems to stand *still* from the moment Peer leaves Solveig strengthens, in my opinion, the legitimacy of a purely allegorical reading of her part

in the last act. After the third act, she is not presented as a realistic character. This *presence-existence*, characterized by reverie and concern, brings our thoughts to Bion's concept *reverie*. Solveig's blindness and other features of the final scene have been included in my analysis of her receptive qualities and how they function vis-à-vis Peer. That she finally encourages Peer to dream indicates in my interpretation that she puts herself at Peer's disposal in facilitating the development of a core, analogous to Bion's *O* (1970).

Relevant concepts

In the third article, it is Bion's ideas of thinking and containment that are relevant. I will give some more space for theoretical considerations in introducing these, than I did with the two first articles. The reason is that the theory is quite summarily presented in the article. I will not render the concepts I use, but try to put specific concepts in relation to Klein's, to make the relationship between article three and the other articles more clear. I will draw on Kristeva's dissemination of Klein (2000/2001), and James Grotstein's of Bion (2007).

Klein claims that the frustrated desire initiates an attack on the *object*. Bion adds that the frustration also initiates an attack on the *links* between experiences. This point forms the theoretical basis for my comprehension that experiences are not linked together in Peer's life; something that has wide-ranging implications for his possibility of developing the authentic part of his personality. This authentic part, named *O* by Bion, is what the container function is intended to facilitate.

Regarding Bion's further development of Klein's thinking, Kristeva notes that the mother Klein implies in her writings, can best be considered an unstable container (Kristeva, 2000/2001); a mother unable to process the child's frustrations, leaving the child unable to overcome and symbolize them. Thus, the child is arrested in the paranoid-schizoid position. So, Bion can be said to complement Klein's theory, by developing the concept of a reliable container function.

Bion specifies the characteristics of a container, and I use his conception in my analysis of Solveig. Bion also describes what happens if the container function fails; the basis for my understanding of Peer in the article. While Klein primarily describes clinical experience in a language matching observations, Bion develops a theory with a high degree of abstraction. Where Klein primarily describes feelings and instincts, Bion elaborates a comprehensive theory of thinking, which is closely connected to the container function. It is the relationship

between thinking and containing that make up the theoretical basis of interpretation in the third article.

It is important to emphasize that Bion's theory of thinking is closely related to emotions. The experiences that are processed are emotional, and they are symbolized by help of thinking, a thinking that is largely unconscious. Thinking thus becomes a mean of processing emotional experience. Since the most basic processing occurs in dreams, the connection between dream and thinking is quite central. This point requires further explication, as it is essential to understand the interpretation in article three.

In his review of Bion's view of dreams, Grotstein (2007, p. 267) draws a parallel to Winnicott's criticism of Klein. Winnicott accuses Klein of being more concerned about the *meaning* of children's play, than with playing in itself. According to Grotstein, the same principle may apply to psychoanalytic practice, where one has been more concerned about the content of dreams than with dreaming in itself. Bion considers dreams essential in processing experience, and thus establishing and maintaining a variety of mental functions. Psychopathology is fundamentally the result of a damaged ability to dream. (Grotstein, 2007, p. 267). Consequently, the ability to use thinking in processing experience will suffer as well, because dreaming is the first step in developing this ability.

In his discourse on Bion, Grotstein emphasize a point of great relevance to the relation between article two and three. In article two, I analyse an excerpt where tears, in the form of dewdrops, accuse Peer for not having allowed them to heal a wound related to his undeveloped self. Now, the tears have lost their power. Peer has not been able to benefit from a process of sorrow. He ends up running to Solveig in a state that I have compared with Klein's *pining* (article two).

It is essential for the relation between the articles that the idea of Solveig as a container of Peer's emotional state, (central in article three), replaces his deficient ability to mourn, which is the subject of article two. These relations are not made explicit in the articles, and is therefore worth pointing out here.

When the container-contained relationship is established in the last scene, and Solveig encourages Peer to dream, a possible healing process is implied –a process along many dimensions where, according to Bion, also emotional *wounds* may get healed (Grotstein, 2007, p. 268). This means that the wound, which the tears could not heal (article two), now

can be healed if Peer develops the ability to dream in the sense Bion indicates (article three). This strengthens the connection between article two and three. However, we have to remember that this possibility is implied by theoretical considerations. Ibsen's work ends before any of the kind happens.

We have to note the difference between Bion's container concept from similar terms. Containing is actually something other than attachment, although the latter is an effect of containment and a premise for it to work. Applied to *Peer Gynt*, the function that Solveig, in my interpretation, develops during her life cannot be released before she unites with Peer. Although the union represents an attachment, what potentially takes place between them is something more specific.

Containing is also different from Winnicott's *holding*, with which it is sometimes confused. Grotstein writes about the difference in this way:

«The holding-object mother is an intuitive mother who reads her infant's needs – but more to the point, she functions as a back-ground object who is preoccupied with facilitating the autonomous development of her infant. My terms for her are

...existential coach” and “background presence of primary identification”. Bion's container concept refers initially to a mother who bears and absorbs her infant's emotional states, transforms them, and “interprets” them to her infant. She is, in effect, an emotional instructor to her infant. (2007, p. 162-163)

Grotstein calls the motherly container an "emotional instructor". In her last remark, Solveig *instructs* Peer to dream. Thus, she makes an effort to initiate a fundamental capability of *processing* in Peer's mind. In line with the theoretical basis of article three, an effect of dream-work is that the frustration, which I considered to form the basis for the bride-robbery (article one) is modified, symbolized and can be included in the psychic structure (article three). Whether this *actually* occurs or not is located outside *Peer Gynt*, and is therefore not part of my analysis.

A futuristic reading

Inspired by Kittang, I consider my reading of *Peer Gynt* as futuristic (2002, p. 23). This means that I trace meanings that were not comprehensible in Ibsen's own time. Nevertheless, they lie hidden in his work. This is due to the fact that the ideas I employ were not sufficiently elaborated before the middle of the last century. Thus, it was not possible to catch sight of the

connections I focus on. The way *Peer Gynt* may carry the *seed* to something quite new, impossible to decipher for Ibsen's contemporary readers, is in my view most obvious in the final scene. From the very beginning, this scene is regarded unclear and unsatisfactory, not only thematically but also artistically (e.g. Bjørnson, 1867/1967, p. 38). The scene is considered a riddle, and has been subject to a number of different, also contradictory, interpretations.

On this basis, I will tentatively put the final scene into a more extensive dialogue with other interpretations. The way I organize the thesis, the scene belongs to the third article, and is analysed in light of Bion. I will focus on the very last line, where Solveig encourages Peer to dream. Her call comes just after the Button-Moulder has threatened to come back. Therefore, dream-work can be regarded essential in saving Peer from the de-individuation that The Button Moulder wants to subject him to.

I choose to carry out this discussion here, because the findings concern a central part of *Peer Gynt* and are little discussed in the article.

Different views on *dream*

I will now try to profile my interpretation of Solveig in the last scene, against viewpoints from central Ibsen scholars. In particular, I will ask how we can understand what it means when Solveig in the last line encourages Peer to *dream*. I interpret this appeal as a subject-constitutive act. This may be questioned, because the word "dream" is several places in the work being used in exactly the opposite way, i.e. to name one of Peer's many escape mechanisms.

Let us look at the sequence where I interpret "stillborn knowledge" as an expression of an insufficiently developed capacity to accumulate self-knowledge (see article three). Peer identifies his own foundation as "Figments, dreams, and still-born knowledge." I choose to focus on the latter, but we register that Peer lists three types of problematic foundations, one of which is *dream*. It is reasonable to understand dream as equivalent with escapism, which is the opposite of becoming.

We have to interpret words differently, according to the context they form part of. When for instance Archer translates Ibsen's Norwegian "anger" in the third act as "repentance" and the same word later appears as "remorse", he shows the legitimacy in considering the context. The English "repentance," contains what Norwegian language divides into two; often

expressed as the wording "anger og omvendelse". In the fifth act, Archer interpret "anger" more in line with a painful process, connoted in the word "remorse." Although I claim that Archer is wrong in his first interpretation (see the article), what he does is entirely legitimate.

Similarly, one can interpret "dream" as an *escapism* somewhere in the work and as a *constitutive* activity somewhere else, as I do. If one operates with the same interpretation of dream through the entire work, as Knut Brynhildsvoll (2002) seems to do, his questioning of Solveig's invitation to dream in the last line, is quite reasonable. After a complex and innovative interpretation, he first concludes in line with an idealistic tradition, that "Peer is reborn as a substantial being in a virgin's thoughts"²¹ (Ibid. p. 170). However, he writes that this substantial subject-concept has a "cosmetic imperfection", namely that Solveig encourages the "newborn Peer" to sleep and dream. Brynhildsvoll believes that Solveig thus opens up for a continuation of using dreams as escapism, which have led Peer into his crisis. Brynhildsvoll concludes that one finds conflicting notions in the work in general, and that they remain unreconciled to the end.

Brynhildsvoll's point is that the work's "message" is the interplay, not the mutually exclusiveness, between tendencies of dissolving the subject, and opposite tendencies of making it substantial. This interaction represents in his view a modern understanding of the subject, which assumes that conflicting tendencies cannot be solved by a privileged choice of one tendency over the other. Thus, Brynhildsvoll does what Kittang calls for, namely focusing how Ibsen *transforms* the ideas entering his creation of the work, into something pointing ahead of his own time.

Tjønneland describes similar tendencies in several of Ibsen's works, as an interplay between modern and postmodern elements. He argues that it is not a question of coming to a decision, but to describe the "specific relations between fixed points, and lack of such"²² (1993, p. 13). He speaks about Ibsen and modernity in general, and not specifically about *Peer Gynt*. In my view Brynhildsvoll makes an attempt to do what Tjønneland calls for, namely to describe the specific relation between the dissolving and formative forces, both as personality tendencies and as other topics. I have analysed several such tendencies in the first and second article in the light of the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive position.

²¹ Translation from Norwegian: "Peer gjenfødtes som substansielt vesen i en jomfrus tankeverden."

²² Translation from Norwegian: «beskrive den konkrete relasjonen mellom faste holdepunkter og mangel på sådanne»

With these diverse views in mind, it is legitimate to question whether Solveig's invitation to dream might have a different implication. I interpret her call to dream as one of several subject-constitutive functions at Solveig's disposal. It interacts with other capabilities. This represents something new compared to an idealistic-romantic understanding of self-constitution. In the light of Bion's ideas, the final scene emerges as something quite new, not an expression of irreconcilable opposites as Brynhildsvoll maintains. Neither as a harmonization in an idealistic or existential sense.

Østerud is yet another scholar who treats the last scene as a problem on modern premises (2000). He describes the inner space Solveig offers Peer as a "stiffened, claustrofobic room of anxiety"²³ (Ibid. p. 95). Such a definition of a psychological or existential space is the opposite of Bion's container-concept. His concept is also spatial, but in an opening way. Østerud sees Solveig's claustrum as an extension of the one Peer describes in act four, where he identifies himself with a toad that looks out of a block of sandstone (2000, p. 79). Peer interprets the toad as "sig selv - nok/ to himself enough!". Here, it is reasonable to interpret that Peer identifies a part of himself with a claustrum. It is also interesting to go a step further, and specify the "enough" as a locked in position in psychodynamic terms.

Although Brynhildsvoll and Østerud offer different interpretations, they both represent post-idealistic positions. Brynhildsvoll claims that Ibsen maintained a contradictory conceptualization of the modern man in the way he dramatized the end of *Peer Gynt*. Østerud considers the final scene as a "claustrum" with no new possibility offered. Many recent interpretations have in common that they challenge a harmonized idealistic-romantic view, where the dilemmas unfolded in the work is mediated into a higher unity in the last scene.

Other scholars believe that Solveig receives Peer because she is completely out of touch with the realities of his life (Helland, 2000). This is a reasonable interpretation, if we read the text literally and not allegorically. If we fail to recognize the symbolic level, Solveig lives separated from Peer without knowing anything about his life. Her waiting for him is based on a completely unrealistic ground. And earlier on, we find a similar understanding in the literature about *Peer Gynt*. Arne Garborg wrote that Solveig's dreamy existence represents an unrealistic sentimentality (1876/1967). Garborg could not see that her dreaming and singing serves any meaningful function. When I interpret Solveig's dreamy attitude as *reverie* (Bion

²³ Translation from Norwegian: "stivnet, klaustrofobisk angstrom"

1962a), I consider it a contribution to a personality-constitutive function, which Solveig develops into.

One who clearly points in the same direction is Edvard Beyer (1967). He considers Solveig's call to dream as an opportunity for Peer to realize his true identity. This possibility lies hidden in dreaming and fantasy-life, but Beyer does not specify this point any further (1967, p. 182). We find the same view in Daniel Haakonsen (1967). For him, Solveig preserves an image of Peer at his best, and indirectly tells him so in the last scene, "this is not you, I remember and know who you really are, I can show you the way to your true self"²⁴ (1967, p. 162).

So, Haakonsen claims that Solveig from the very beginning has seen Peer as he really is, and preserved this image until they meet in the final scene. With the power of imagination, this image may be realized when Peer enters her hut. This is a idealistic kind of reading that has dominated large parts of the *Peer Gynt* interpretations. Haakonsen continues:

It was the fantasy-riddled young boy Solveig loved, and it is largely by the gift of imagination that Peer answers Solveig's quaint call. In that Peer chooses to be Solveig's Peer, he shows that he is, and in the depths of his mind has always *been*, him²⁵ (1967, p. 163)

I quote this so deliberately because the formal structure, and to some extent its content, corresponds with my interpretation. My point is that *within* such an idealistic interpretation, new ideas may be hidden. When first recognized, they allow for more text elements to participate in the interpretation. These new ideas are primarily that an unfulfilled self, as many scholars consider Peer to be, is better understood as *undeveloped* in a psychodynamic sense, than unfulfilled in an idealistic sense. In this view, the process Solveig offers Peer is quite different from an idealistic realization of a latent idea of the true self.

My concern is, with Bion's help, to demonstrate that Solveig's call for *dreaming* contains a specification of personality development that idealistic interpretations do not offer. Therefore, the last scene is neither meaningless, nor a claustrum, but shows itself as a constitutive act formed on a new basis.

²⁴ Translated from Norwegian: "dette er ikke deg, jeg husker og vet hvem du egentlig er, jeg kan vise deg veien til ditt rette jeg."

²⁵ Translated from Norwegian: "Det var den fantasibårne unggutten Solveig elsket, og det er i høy grad ved fantasiens gave Peer svarer på Solveigs eiendommelige appell. I og med at Peer velger å være Solveigs Peer, viser han at han er, og altså hele tiden i dypet av sitt sinn har vært, ham "

The structure of my interpretation resembles the idealistic ones, but the content becomes psychodynamic, and not primarily idealistic-romantic, Christian or existential. As I see it, a psychodynamic understanding requires its place alongside other models. Then the motherly third of the contradictory triangle, which Peers expresses to Solveig, is included in a meaningful unity: " My mother; my wife; oh, thou innocent woman! — in thy love — oh, there hide me, hide me!"

I am of course not alone in having focused on the *motherly* quality; most psychoanalytical analyses do that. However, they do not specify the content the way I do. Anthi for example, underlines that Peer in the last scene is united with an idealized mother object, but he does not specify the characteristics Ibsen has assigned to Solveig. He seems to perceive Solveig through Peer's eyes all the way to the end (1981).

Irony is a recurring aspect in the work and it serves to suspend the seriousness of many scenes in *Peer Gynt*. However, a gravity remains in many of the scenes I have interpreted, and particularly in the last one, which is little affected by irony.

Conclusion and findings

I will now summarize the themes in the articles by pointing to what I regard as discoveries presented in the thesis. I restrict my presentation to what I perceive as original findings, as they are argued for in my articles. Here, I present them in chronological order according to their occurrence in *Peer Gynt*. This order corresponds with the way the findings emerge in the articles.

- A greedy desire in Klein's sense, seems to form the main motivation for the bride-robbery, and thus for the direction the drama takes.
- This greed constitutes a desire structure which is also the cause of mother Åse's poverty, and tentatively of her death. It also forms the underlying premise for the content and character of Peer's guilt towards his mother.
- Solveig's behaviour towards Peer in the first act has a complementary character that contributes to activate his greed. Throughout the play, this complementarity develops until it finally represents a couple of "container-contained" in Bion's sense.
- Solveig and The Green Woman represent a split mother object. In itself, this is not original. My contribution is to show that the way Ibsen has constructed them, metaphorically can be

understood as a coin that twists and turns in Peer's mind. The metaphor implies that the split cannot be solved by an existential choice.

- Peer seems to realize that this split can be abolished through grief characterized by guilt, in the form of remorse. Remorse replaces choice.
- Phenomena like sadness, mourning, remorse and guilt seem to have capability to heal the damage made to the maternal object by greed and splitting. Thus, they may also heal Peer's own psyche.
- Both the Dovre King and The Lean Person talk about refinement in ways that suggests that weeping has a function in developing personality.
- Peer encounters mourning and guilt in ways that evacuate or deny the content of the feelings. It seems as if the pain of these feelings has to be avoided at all costs. This warding off of pain is congruent with Klein's views on defenses against psychic pain.
- An episode of envy seems to follow the pattern Klein suggests, in how frustration connected to the mother object initiates an attack on the same object.
- Peer's inability to link his life experiences together, seems to be due to a deficient ability to think in Bion's sense. The interpretation of this lack is based on Peer's encounters with metaphors for psychic functions in the last act.

This means that arrested thinking capacity forms a central part of how the *undeveloped* in *Peer Gynt* can be understood. It constitutes a theme that complements greed and splitting as arresting factors of personality development. The greedy desire is the result of a lack of tolerance for frustration, and so is the deficient ability to think about emotional experiences. Thus, frustration is evacuated - or acted out - as for example in the bride robbery. This point ties together the findings of the first and third article.

- Solveig's attitudes and characteristics develop in a way that corresponds to the elements of Bion's container function. That the *time* seems to stand still while she is daydreaming about Peer, is understood as a reference to Bion's concept of *reverie*, closely related to *containment*. In the last scene, Solveig implements a set of functions, resembling Bion's presentation of containment.

- Seen together, the findings represent a new understanding of key characteristics of Peer's behavior and life choices, and of his interaction with and relationship to Solveig.
- The findings form a comprehensive pattern that in its structure and in its details corresponds with Klein and Bion's ideas.
- The findings represent a new way to understand Peer's arrested personality development.
- The findings represent a specification of the relationship between Solveig as mother, and Peer as little boy, in the last scene.

It is important to emphasize that the thesis is developed in an inductive way by the findings I have made. One discovery has led to the next in a continuous circular movement between text and theory. Initial research questions have not played any significant role. Therefore, I have chosen to sum up the themes as findings instead of questions.

This does not mean, however, that the theorists and *Peer Gynt* fit together like hand in glove. What it means is that one single connection of meanings between them can be read in this way. On a number of points, the meaning I seek to clarify is present only in seeds or rudiments. Elsewhere, it is more elaborated and explicit in the drama. Some places, "my story" is entangled with Christian or existential stories. And elsewhere, irony threatens to abolish the gravity. Nevertheless, I will argue that the pattern I have revealed is clearly rooted in the work.

Further research

Finally, I will briefly suggest some ways to continue this research. For instance, the issue of the Oedipal or triangular aspects of personality development is absent in this thesis. In spite of the fact that both Klein's and Bion's theories are dominated by a dyadic focus, the oedipal perspective is also clearly present in their thinking about development.

I will point out two ways in which this theme can form input to new interpretations of *Peer Gynt*:

1. To trace the paternal dynamics as a theme. It involves analysing the male characters, both the real and the allegorical. This applies not least to Solveig's father, the Dovre King, the Strange Passenger, the Lean Person and the Button Moulder. Their function can be associated with Peer's absent father. In that way, we can trace the paternal quality as something undeveloped, in a similar manner as the motherly, but with

different content. This theme has to be considered in interaction with what is revealed in the present thesis.

2. A similar task may be to analyse the male characters' ways of *confronting* Peer. Each in their own way, they contribute to interpretations of elements of his personality. In the fifth act, a confronting and revealing “male” strategy interacts with a female and enclosing element. The men, as well as metaphors and natural phenomena, represent the first strategy. Solveig represents the other. The interaction between the confronting and the revealing strategies on the one hand, and the containing and receptive strategy on the other, represent an exciting perspective that would supplement my work.

Closing

I will say a few words about how we as psychologists can make use of fictional literature, and especially a work like *Peer Gynt*.

Could it be the case that we as psychologists can increase our competence by actively engaging in fictional literature? Fictional literature, and especially a classical work such as *Peer Gynt*, is often describing *a journey of formation*. This does not imply a journey where one learns manners, but a journey where one is to realize inherent possibilities in relation to specific sets of values. Even though this journey is often concrete and happening in a geographic place, it is also to be understood figuratively: One leaves a home, spends time in a foreign place, and then returns – for the accounts of one’s life to be settled. Gadamer writes that the *real formation* often happens the moment one returns home (1975/2010, p. 40). What happens in the case of *Peer Gynt*, is an open question.

To a certain degree, a therapeutic situation can be regarded as a form of homecoming, where one is to *return to oneself*. Something is to come into form that has remained undeveloped during the person’s lifelong journey thus far. Fictional literature is often about human beings who strive to realize inherent possibilities, or who *both* succeed and fail at the same time. Thus, fictional literature offers a more complex understanding of what it means to develop as a human being, than those we find in clinical literature, not to mention in diagnostic manuals.

In his discussion of competence, Rønnestad puts... ”awareness of complexity²⁶” as the pivotal point (2008, p. 282). Fictional literature can help us further in developing this ability.

In this thesis, I have highlighted which parts of Peer’s *psyche* that can be said to contribute to his lack of self-realization, especially when it comes to love and attachment. Peer is very vital, and the fact that vitality and obstacles are merged in one and the same person, and in one and the same course of life, can help us develop a *complex* understanding of what promotes and what hinders human development, and how these contradictory dimensions are ”fold into one another²⁷”, to use an expression from Dines Johansen. (2004, p. 73).

Another trait of fictional literature is that no matter how unsympathetic the protagonist is portrayed, we are likely to develop empathy with him (Nussbaum, 1990). For psychologists, the exercise of practicing empathy with the *intolerable* and *contradictory* is considered a central part of the competence (Zachrisson, 1997). Active use of fictional literature can assist us in this. In this kind of literature, we find human tendencies, often of opposite characters, woven together to one *single thread of words* (Dines Johansen, 2004, p. 73). In similar ways, we find complex tendencies like helplessness and competence, inhibitions and unfolding, pain and lust, insights and defences, woven together in *one single person*; both in the person and as a life story. To maintain the understanding of the *complex* in an atmosphere marked by empathy is in my view the foremost competence of psychologists. To do that, we need fictional literature.

In her treatment of the epistemological function of literature, Annlaug Bjørnsnøs writes about Ricoeurs take on fictional literature as a *privileged detour to self-knowledge*²⁸ (Bjørnsnøs 2012). Here I wish to retrieve three points: One is regarding the *other*, or otherness, and its meaning for the development of identity (Ibid p. 68). This is to be understood in a wide sense of the term, that the human being does not become itself in solitude, but rather needs to travel detours to be able to become its own self. Using fictional literature is a detour of this kind, following Ricoeur.

²⁶ Norwegian: bevissthet om kompleksiteten.

²⁷ Danish: foldet ind i hinanden

²⁸ Norwegian: privilegert omvei til selverkjennelse

The other point that Bjørnsnøs gathers from Ricoeur, is that:

the literary story works as an emblematic model, because it simultaneously described and imitates action, and assesses and judges this action. Through interpretations of the story, the reader can process his notions about himself and his life, and about his relationship with fellow human beings²⁹ (Bjørnsnøs 2012, p. 65).

This means that the actions are not presented in a neutral way, but that they are also assessed; as for example, despicable, exemplary etc, without it being said explicitly, but lying built into the means of the text. In the means of the drama, different persons can assess the actions of the protagonist quite differently without the author having to take a stand, as is the case in *Peer Gynt*, and maybe more so in *The Wild Duck*.

A last point I want to retrieve from Bjørnsnøs, nuances things I have already written:

Following Ricoeur, the narrative composition brings about its own dialectics, the dialectics between *la concordance* (the principle of order, chaining of events) and *la discordance* (peripetia, the unexpected, disharmonious aspects). The dialectics appear as a form of rivalry between these two powers or principles, and makes the reader uncertain – he/she does not know how it will end, and this field of tension creates room for immersion, interpretation and rethinking³⁰. (2012, p. 71).

Every psychologist should practice the same type of productive uncertainty.

Bjørnsnøs concludes by problematizing whether it be possible for a human being to gather its life story and identity in a unified story. This is a central theme in the secondary literature on *Peer Gynt*. Here we find a division between those who regards the work as a questioning of the idea of unified stories or identities, and those who think Peer is committing a crime against the formation of identity in his own life, and then gets a chance to amend this in the final act. Without relating her viewpoints to a specific work, Bjørnsnøs concludes by saying

²⁹ Translation from Norwegian: «... den litterære fortellingen fungere som emblematiske modell, fordi den på en og samme tid beskriver og imiterer handling, og vurderer og dømmer denne handlingen. Gjennom tolkninger av fortellingen kan leseren bearbeide sine forestillinger om seg selv og sitt liv, og om forholdet til sine medmennesker»

³⁰ Translation from Norwegian: «Ifølge Ricoeur setter den narrative komposisjonen i gang en egen dialektikk, dialektikken mellom *la concordance* (ordensprinsippet, samklang, sammenkjedning av hendelser) og *la discordance* (peripetiene, de uventede, disharmoniske innslagene). Dialektikken fortøner seg som en form for rivalitet mellom disse to kreftene eller prinsippene, og gjør blant annet at leseren blir usikker – han/hun vet ikke hvordan det vil ende, og dette spenningsfeltet skaper rom for innlevelse, fortolkning og nytenkning.»

that it is impossible for a human being to access a unity in their life and identity, and that much will remain hidden by the unconscious mechanisms of repression. The most important thing, in her view, is that these shortcomings also constitute identity (Ibid, p. 74).

Perhaps shortcomings in the personality is not only constitutional for identity, but even a source of power for life, a power that makes *Peer Gynt* so appealing, and as Leonard Cohen says like this in his song *Anthem*:

“There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.”

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Articles one, two and three

Article one:

The structure of desire in Peer Gynt's relationship to Solveig. A reading inspired by Melanie Klein *Ibsen Studies*, 13:2, 130-160, 2013. doi: [10.1080/15021866.2013.849029](https://doi.org/10.1080/15021866.2013.849029) (co-author A Zachrisson)

Article two:

Tears, remorse and reparation in Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. A reading inspired by Melanie Klein. *The Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review*. 37:113-124, 2014. doi.org/10.1080/01062301.2014.962323

Article three:

Stray thoughts – seeking home, Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* read in light of Wilfred Bion's ideas. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. 2015. doi: 10.1111/1745-8315.12440