

## **Towards a sustainable imagination**

*Reflections on Olav H. Hauge and the teaching of poetry*

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### **[Abstract]**

This chapter discusses reading as an aesthetic, embodied pleasure, capable of forming world-opening passages for students struggling to come to grip with life. The poems discussed are by Olav H. Hauge (1908-1994), one of Norway's outstanding poets. For many years, Hauge struggled with his mental health, and his poetry reflects his search for a better life. Drangeid explores three topics, all related to the imagination. First, he points towards the importance of poetic passages connecting both poet and reader to everyday life. Next, he considers Hauge's animation of his environment and the resulting entwining of humans and non-humans. This leads to a discussion of tensions in Hauge's life and poetry, between connectedness and longing for wider horizons. Based on eco-cognitive theory and sustainability understood as a textual quality, Drangeid argues in favour of a more imaginative teaching approach.

### **Poet and fruit grower**

The poet Olav H. Hauge (1908-1994) lived his whole life in Ulvik, a small fjordside village in the Hardanger region, Western Norway. He was an orchardist and a farmer, a humble apple grower on a five-acre farm perched high above the village with a magnificent view of the fjordscape (Grinde 2016, 19). More surprisingly, he lived his early years in books, partly due to health problems. He read everything in the local public library and connected to culture abroad through books sent from his mother's brother who had immigrated to America (Stegane 2014). He sometimes snuck away from his tasks at the family farm and climbed a nearby pine tree "to immerse himself in worlds opened up by the printed word" (Grinde 2016, 18).

As a young poet, he was inspired by Norwegian and English romanticism; later his poetry defies easy labels. It can be argued that he is a Classicist, a Romantic and a Modernist at the same time. Regardless of categorisations, he is now regarded as “one of the most significant Norwegian poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Stegane 2014), and he has been translated into more than twenty languages. An international audience will experience a unique merging of Norwegian culture, eastern philosophy and European and Anglo-American modernism. Closely related to this blend is Hauge’s life-long search for passages leading from alienation towards meaningful world connections. The American poet Robert Bly, one of Hauge’s translators, writes, “He has much to give, and he gives it in small spoonfuls, as nurses give medicine. Everywhere in the daylight of this work, you see tiny experiences being valued” (2008, xi).

### **The Cell**

Hauge was hospitalised several times at Valen Psychiatric Hospital, not far from his hometown. In all he spent more than five years at this asylum. His poem “The Cell”, which was published posthumously, reflects this experience. The speaking persona looks back on his former withdrawal from the outside world. The poem opens with, “I belonged here. / Perhaps I always / longed for here” (Hauge 2016, 392). The next lines are a description of the closet. It is austere, with naked walls, a mattress, some blankets, a rubber bedpan, a radiator, a door with a small slot, and iron bars on the window. On the walls, strange marks and letters are scratched in stone. The persona recalls beating the radiator while he sang. He seems to live in a world of shattered meaning. Nevertheless, the poem ends with a gleam of light. During daytime the sun reaches even this room, laying “a golden slab / on the floor. / Here as well” (392).

Are poems like “The Cell” capable of leading the reader towards essential life qualities, towards joy of life and well-being? Obviously, such a world-opening potential is dependent on certain poetic qualities, which points us towards the three related themes explored in this chapter. First, I look into the reciprocal relation between environmental experiences and reading, focusing on the reader’s imagination as essential. Next, I consider Hauge’s animation of the non-human environment, his anthropomorphism. This leads towards a tension in many of Hauge’s poems, between dwelling and wider horizons, between everyday life and dreams. I continue by discussing a sensorimotor, embodied approach to the teaching of poetry, focusing

again on the importance of enhancing the students' imagination. Concluding my discussion, I relate the poems to sustainability, used as a textual concept with relevance to the teaching of poetry. My contribution is meant for educational settings, and not as literary criticism in the strict sense.<sup>1</sup> I limit myself to Hauge's poetry, and mostly focus on his later work.

Nevertheless, my approach should be relevant beyond this particular poet and his Norwegian context.

### **Eco-cognitive criticism and sustainability**

Theoretically I place myself within ecocriticism, broadly understood in accordance with both Greg Gerrard's definition as "the study of the relationship of the human and non-human" (2012, 5), and Cheryl Glotfelty's understanding of this field: "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (1996, xviii).<sup>2</sup> To throw light on both the poet's depiction of nature–culture and the corresponding reading experience, I also lean on eco-cognitive and cognitive literary criticism and research (Weik von Mossner 2017, Cave 2016, Gallese 2017a). From this position, I explore the poet's and the reader's movements back and forth between literature and reality, between the immediate response and reflection.

Regarding sustainability, my point of departure is Hugo Zapf (2016, 27) and his model for sustainable texts, understood in accordance with his version of cultural ecology as an ecological force within culture. Zapf's model consists of three discursive modes: an *imaginative counterdiscourse* which foregrounds what is culturally marginalised; a *culture-critical metadiscourse* which deconstructs hegemonic ideologies; and a *reintegrative interdiscourse* which brings together, in creative and transformative ways, knowledge otherwise kept apart (Zapf 2016, 95-121).

Like Zapf, I consider the first mode to be fundamental, expressing both our imaginative capabilities and literature's capacity for calling forth new or alternative worlds. Following Zapf, I do not see textual (or poetic) sustainability as restricted to explicit environmental writing; it is dependent on literary qualities within the three mentioned discursive modes.

Leaning on James J. Gibson (1979) and Terrence Cave (2016), I use the term *affordance* to provide new perspectives on literary features. The concept was first coined by Gibson: "The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill" (1979, 127). This goes for humans as well, although what characterises human culture is creative use of the environment. In "The Cell", for instance, the patient uses the radiator as a music instrument, "encased in steel; / such a wondrous sound / when I beat it

/ and sang” (392). The naked walls in the cell are transformed too, into whiteboards with strange marks and “letters scratched in stone”. In Cave’s criticism, not only the depicted environment, but also the literary conventions, motifs and thematic elements, are affordances. They are always relational, i.e. dependent on the reader. The reader’s realisation of the literary text may be limited, but in principle, the potential is unlimited. The “meagreness” of the text makes this possible. Literature is always unspecified compared to reality (Cave 2016, 25) and therefore dependent on the reader’s imagination. This makes the affordances open-ended and prepares for innovation.

### **Poetic passages**

Hauge’s search for meaning is both a life struggle and a poetic task. The existential value of his experiences is dependent on his aesthetic exploration and of what literature offers (Cave 2016, 46-62). The most important tool is his Parker pen, capable of turning memories and life experiences into art, even when life is fragile. “Solitude is sweet” is the first line in the poem “Behind the Mountain of Solitude” (*Beneath the Crag*, Under bergfallet, 1951). The next lines are a warning: “so long as the road back / to the others / is open” (84). Poetry seems to be his search for such a “road back”. However, he did not always find the passage open. In a journal entry from 1957, he writes: “*Madness* – Is most often an intensity of emotions and imagination, so that you forget yourself. The inner world becomes the only real one” (Hauge 2016, 130). Later the same year, he notes, “from this side poems are rarely, if ever written” (131). Also in “The Cell”, the patient guards himself against the world. The outer world is almost absent. However, “The Cell” *looks back* on mental illness, it comes from a boundary where poetry is again possible, while also “visions are revealed” (131).

What is the relevance of this for teaching? First, both the poet and the student reader create the poem as mental text-worlds (Werth 1999) – imaginative and alternative worlds – “on the basis of perceived common ground knowledge” (Stockwell 2009, 7). To understand others and ourselves, our brain-body system uses both physical reality and our imagination, including fictional worlds, constantly switching among them (Gallese 2017a, 27, cf Drangeid 2018, 57-60).

Next, a poetic reorientation makes Hauge’s search for meaning recognisable for young readers. Especially in the first part of Hauge’s work, from *Embers in the Ashes* (Glør i oska, 1946) until at least *On the Eagle’s Hillock* (På Ørnetuva, 1961), his feeling of alienation is strong. He expresses this outsider-experience in accordance with the romantic poetry he

admired. This includes Wergeland as well as the great poets in English romanticism: Yeats, Shelley, Blake and Tennyson. Later, it will also include German-speaking poets like Hölderlin, Trakl and Celan (Sejersted 2007, 203). Although he never abandons the romantic tradition, there is a development. In the sixties, just when his formal artistry as a sonneteer is at its peak, something new appears.

Hauge seems to find new pathways. More often, he turns towards the immediate—towards his farming tools and working tasks, describing it all in a concrete manner, often in short poems inspired by both Anglo-American imagism, Japanese haiku-poetry, and ancient Chinese poets. In the collection *On the Eagle's Perch*, he even names his Chinese masters: Ch'ü Yüan, Li Po, T'ao Ch'ien, Lu Chi, Wang Wei (Andersen 2002, 32). Distant traditions, alluded to in the title of the collection *Droplets on the Eastern Wind* (Dropar i austavind, 1966), offer new possibilities. Although living in his small village, this autodidact poet was not an intellectual backwoodsman, and he steadily expanded his scope.

At least in Norway, his way of writing was new and soon inspired a whole generation of younger poets, especially the so-called “Profil”-generation, who were named after their literary journal. Having Hauge as one of their models, they wrote what they called new simple poems (“nyenkle dikt”). Promoted among others by the leading Norwegian poet Jan Erik Vold, Hauge obtained an almost mythical status. In 1972, he even appeared on stage at Hugesund music festival, in front of a hippie-audience who treated him as a rock star.

Nevertheless, Hauge's later poems cannot always pass as “simple”. Even the short ones are often more complex than an inexperienced reader can be expected to reflect upon. At the same time, they offer many intuitive reading pleasures. Even when touching existential questions, they can be read as straightforward poems. This makes them useful for teaching literature. Many of Hauge's poems are within the students' reach even in primary and lower-secondary school. What makes them relevant is especially their yearning for meaning sought in everyday life (Andersen 2017, 24). His search for meaning includes both humans and more-than-humans (Abram 2017), both nature and culture, or rather, the mixture of nature–culture (Latour 2017). Hauge describes his orchard, the cultivated landscape, animals and plants, and the wilderness surrounding the fjord.

One short poem, “And I Was Grief”, from *Droplets*, touches upon this return to the immediate. In the first lines, the speaking voice is grief, dwelling in a cave. He is also pride, building beyond the stars. The last three lines, however, reflect a new entwinement: “Now I

build in the nearest tree, / and each morning when I wake / the pine threads its needles with gold” (223). Often cited when discussing these ideas are some lines in the poem “Everyday Life”, also from *Droplets*. Realising that the storms in life are left behind, the poet points out the following: “But you can find a way to live / in everyday life as well, / in our ordinary grey days” (244). The poet is resigned to an ordinary life (Sejersted 2016, 310); however, he is filled with a silent joy: “After you’re done with your tasks, / you can fry up some bacon / and read Chinese poetry” (244).

Not always content with his human dwelling, Hauge often focuses on plants and animals in the environment. Trond Arnesen (2016) found more than 70 species (taxa) mentioned in the 432 poems he analysed. Most frequent are trees: birch, scots pine, apple, and great willow. Among plants growing in the outlying farmlands, juniper and matgrass are most often mentioned. It “provides a testimony to the traditional agricultural landscape and the connected species and activities and hardship that still speak to us” (2016, 23). This hardship is significant. Hauge worked as a farmer until he was seventy-three. However, his attitude to manual work was ambivalent; he recognises its poetic importance, but it is also an obstacle to his writing. Most important for my own perspective is Arnesen’s conclusion regarding Hauge’s exploration of his natural–cultural surroundings. What Hauge offers is not a pastoral idyll, like in romantic poetry. His writing is based on practical experience and manual work, an “extensive knowledge of plants and ecosystems” (2016, 23) and a “high degree of environmental awareness” (23). This is more in line with what Terry Gifford labels the post-pastoral, not understood as after the pastoral, but as reaching beyond it, “works that successfully suggest a collapse of the human/nature divide while being aware of the problematics involved. It is more about connections than the disconnections essential to the pastoral” (2014, 16).

The practical work connects Hauge’s writing to the body and to the material world. His text–world connections, however, go beyond farming. A closer look at the poem “Leaf-Huts and Snow-Houses” from *Ask the Wind* (*Spør vinden*, 1971), illustrates other poetic passages with educational relevance. In the first part, the poet is piling together words, more or less at random. He does not much value the resulting poems. Nevertheless, he takes pleasure in making them; it is like having a house for a short while. This comparison prepares for a more far-reaching association. The text leaves behind the piling up of words in favour of childhood memories: “I recall the leaf-huts / we built of branches / when we were kids” (290).

One may ask whether the memories from childhood are a precondition for the poets “piling of words” or the other way around. The best answer is probably that such text–world connections function as two-way passages; they are reciprocal, and not only for the “piling” poet. Regarding Zapf’s sustainable text-model, my suggestion is that the imagination called forth is a prerequisite within literary reading. Without the imagination, the text is left underspecified, without the inferences that allow us to project ourselves into its world (Cave, 2016, 25).

### **The animation of the world**

In this section, I elaborate on the same text–world connection, but focus on human/more-than-human entwinement. My point of departure is the poem, “Scythe” from *Droplets*, in which we meet a farmer so out-of-date that he still uses a scythe, letting it sing quietly in the grass while his own thoughts roam free; “There is no pain, / says the grass, / to fall for the scythe” (263).

In this poem, my primary interest lies in the animation of the scythe and the grass. The animation is made through metaphor, although the scythe is also culturally and metonymically linked to the reaper, a personification of death often used by Hauge. The grass falls victim to the scythe quite literally, while the reaper reminds us that the scytheman is mortal, just like the grass. Death is harsh, but it is mitigated by the absence of pain. Can the scytheman expect to “fall” himself, quietly like the grass, and not for a noisy mowing machine?

The poem can be accused of being anthropocentric, i.e. seeing nature from a human perspective, in accordance with human values and objectives (Stueland 2016, 165). Hauge ascribes human-like traits to both the scythe and the grass. However, I understand his anthropomorphism differently. It emphasises the fate of the grass just as much as the human predicament. The poem could be read as a counterdiscourse and a culture-critical discourse (Zapf 2016), targeting what Bruno Latour calls the modern propensity to de-animate the more-than-human world (2017, 41-74). In their understanding of the world, the moderns try to consider the non-humans as inert, without the capacity to act. They consider themselves as the only actors. Contrary to the physical environment and the more-than-human biosphere, humans are endowed with subjectivity and intention. Latour considers this notion both dangerous and difficult to uphold in a situation where the environment increasingly acts upon us, responding to exploitation and pollution. Humans by contrast, seem incapable of setting forth the necessary actions; we do not answer. The view that the environment functions without intention or will, and is subject only to blind cause and effect, is not viable, according

to Latour. A scientist seeking objective knowledge through a deanimation of the environment would actually be unable to speak at all, because language is metaphoric, animating even our physical environment (Lakoff and Johnson 2003). Therefore, instead of trying to make the environment into an inert background, “we must learn to inhabit what could be called a *metamorphic zone*” (Latour 2017, 58). Since the modern distinction between humans and more-than-humans gives just as little meaning as the nature/culture distinction, we need all kinds of “morphisms” to be able to register and follow all the transactions going on between humans and non-humans. The relevance for Hauge is obvious, as Latour writes:

it makes no sense to accuse novelists, scientists, or engineers of committing the sin of ‘anthropomorphism’ when they attribute ‘agency’ to ‘something that should not have any.’ Quite to the contrary: if they have to deal with all sort of contradictory ‘morphisms,’ it is because they are trying to explore the form of these actants, which are initially unknown and then gradually domesticated by as many figures as are needed in order to approach them. (66)

Hauge’s human-specific perspective — his senses, body and mind — will necessarily mark his exploration of this zone of transformation. However, is his exploration anthropocentric? Calling upon both Latour and the ecocognitive scholar Alexa Weik von Mossner, I suggest the opposite. In Weik von Mossner’s approach, we recognise Latour’s non-anthropocentric notion of anthropomorphism. Opposed to forms of crude anthropomorphism, she sets forth a critical anthropomorphism. Critical anthropomorphism is to show “awareness of the inevitable anthropocentric bias of one’s interpretation” (2017, 135), while, at the same time, putting oneself in the shoes of the more-than-humans. Hauge’s grass gets a kind of will-to-life to which humans can relate. The use of the old-fashioned scythe does not only alleviate the fall of the grass. Its song also calms the mower and makes his fall less harsh. Hauge brings humans and non-humans closer.

In another poem from *Droplets*, “Wild Rose”, the relationship set up is more traditional, although it is still a *counterdiscourse*. Instead of singing of roses, the poet wants to sing of the thorns and the roots: “how it grips / the rock as firmly as / a girl’s slender hand” (262). Again, the human domain illuminates nature. However, the simile also emphasises the image of the girl’s hand. In “The Birch”, also from *Droplets*, an old man named Halldor contends that the birch grows only in the morning. Without even reflecting on the shift from tree to humans, the persona dismisses this as nonsense: “I believe we grow while sleeping” (262). Obviously, trees and humans are seen as subjected to the same principle or law. In “Overnight the Grass Turns Green” (*Ask the Wind*), nature’s agency is everywhere. The mist rises, the sun climbs

above the mountains, a bird dares to sing, and even the past is performing: “From mornings long ago joy / faintly beats its copper shield” (274).

It is reasonable that Hauge, the orchardist, animates plants most often. However, he also animates animals, like in “The Crow”, “The Seagull”, and “Hawk and Falcon” (115-116), all from *Slowly the Woods Redden in the Gorge* (Seint rodnar skog i djuvet, 1956). The charming poem “The Cat” (*Droplets*), depicts the first animal that a person visiting the farmyard will run into. The poem recognises the animal as an observant and sentient being, worthy of cross-species empathy: “Speak a little with the cat. / More than anyone / he senses what’s really going on” (s. 263).

In this way, the poetic animation prepares the reader for an understanding of human and more-than-human entwinement, opening up consideration of the non-human, whether animal, plant or landscape. Today such an understanding finds support also within evolutionary biology, genetics, and phenomenology. The different creatures on earth are seen as “co-evolved animal kindred” (Westling 2016, 67). Hauge sometimes states this kind of kinship explicitly. In the poem “Kin” (*Slowly the Woods Redden*), he compares human character traits, moulded by the environment, to the birch, the pine and the nard-grass. The poem starts like this: “If you’re kin to the birch, / you’ll last a long time, / endure both rain and wind” (111). The tough guy is kin to the nard-grass and lasts the longest, at a cost: “Nothing bothers you / – and nobody wants you!”.

Many poetic devices work through what is called estrangement (Shklovsky 1990, 6), defamiliarisation, or dehabitation (Miall 2006, 145, 197). Poetry makes us perceive the ordinary as something new and enchanted. In Hauge’s case, poetry can even be called an ontology close to the animism among many indigenous people. According to the anthropologist Tim Ingold, such animism is not an infusion of spirit into substance, rather it is an immanent dynamic within a field of relations where “beings of all kinds, more or less person-like or thing-like, continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence” (2011, 68). Ingold underlines such an “animic perception of the world” (69) as an alternative to modern cultural models separating us from life. Hauge’s poetry operates within the same field of relations.

## Dweller and wayfarer

Before concluding with some educational afterthoughts, I will qualify my own picture of the dwelling poet. Although Hauge's dependency on his local environment is obvious, one should keep in mind that even in his youth, he felt like an outsider in his village. Besides, being a farmer, he stayed there out of necessity. Hauge as a dweller in life and poetry has been explored by Hadle Oftedal Andersen (2017), reading him – not surprisingly – in the light of Martin Heidegger's essay "Building Dwelling Thinking" (2001, 143-159). This results in several deep and sensitive readings. However, perhaps like myself, Andersen seems to make Hauge into too much of a Heideggerian. After all, it is easy to find poems that balance the picture of the dweller. There are obvious tensions between the village dweller and his longing for a wider horizon, between place and space, between the fruit grower and the poet. The most outspoken in this respect is perhaps "Here I have Lived", from *Ask the Wind*. The speaker has seen years sailing by, has lived his entire life at the same place. However, the poem concludes with this: "Trees and birds have settled in, / but I have not" (291).

Hauge's yearning for the mystical should be mentioned also. In *Slowly the Woods Redden*, the last stanza of the poem "Luminous Spaces" concludes that there shall be luminous spaces "between all things / until the end of time" (126). The first lines, however, call out a warning: "Don't come near, / never too near!". According to Jørgen Magnus Sejersted (2016, 310), Hauge makes allegories of time. He investigates what disrupts our experience of presence and totality. Possibly related to this, is the tension between a manageable life as a dweller and madness, like in "I'll Have to Think of Mischief" from *Gleanings* (Janglestrå, 1980). In this poem, the persona's joy is boiling over, and he thinks of mischief: "throw cold water on the kettle, / hang a stone on the scale, / fall the biggest pine I've got" (339). Hauge often had to calm himself down.

In Hauge's most famous poem, "It is That Dream" (*Droplets*), the longing away from triviality is less ambivalent than in "Luminous Spaces". The dream we carry is that something wonderful will happen, that time and hearts and doors shall open, that even mountains shall open: "that our dream will open, / and that one morning we'll glide / into a cove we didn't know" (266). Still, one should notice that the metaphors are embodied; they are dependent on their literal meaning and on life experiences. "Luminous spaces" are still found in physical manifestations, "between all things", in "self-unfolding" (ecstatic) moments (Rigby 2004, 33).

Possibly, later reflections on Heidegger's concept of dwelling could fit Hauge's work better than the German philosopher's own understanding. Tim Ingold, for instance, holds several aspects of Heidegger's dwelling to be troublesome. First, the concept is actually dependent on some kind of opening or clearing, freed from everyday activities. To "be", the human dweller must paradoxically depart from existence. Contrary to this, animals merely exist in their environment. They cannot reflect on their own existence, and therefore cannot "be" (Ingold 2011, 11). This anthropocentric view is far from Hauge's understanding. This is clear in the poem "The Cat" and in his journal entry from 1955: "Children and animals know best who you are. They see not the outer person, but rather the inner man" (2016, 100).

Moreover, Heidegger's emphasis on a local and settled life does not always fit the tensions in Hauge's poetry. Ingold's understanding that is more dynamic, can accommodate its "movements" better. Hauge tries to open up the world. Such an effort implies, according to Ingold, to embrace the world along a path: "The path, and not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming" (Ingold 2011, 12). Instead of the concept of dwelling, he prefers inhabitation. He considers the environment not to be something we occupy, but a meshwork we inhabit. He calls it "a domain of entanglement" (71) and argues that it is experienced through sight, sound, hearing and touch. Rather than observing a landscape, inhabiting implies becoming part of it. The air even enters our body. With this in mind, Ingold introduces the concept of "weather-world" to emphasise our immersion in our environment (129). This concept fits Hauge better as his work is immersed in a moving and acting environment. Actually, he was a wayfarer himself, and not only intellectually. Seventy years old, he married Bodil Cappelen, artist, tapestry designer and weaver. The poem "The Carpet", *Gleanings*, starts like this: "Weave me a carpet, Bodil, / weave it of dreams and visions, / weave it of wind" (343). Grinde writes, "In his years with Bodil, the poet showed a greater willingness to travel from his native Hardanger" (2016, 25).

### **Poetry in school**

Although my intention is not to recommend specific methods in teaching, I will conclude with some reflections on educational affordances, hopefully with some transfer value to other poets. In this section, I use Hugo Zapf's "sustainable texts"-model (2016, 27), indicating the force of literature within culture. As already mentioned, I place emphasis on the imaginative counterdiscourse.

Textual sustainability is grounded in our imaginative capabilities and literature's capacity for calling forth new or alternative text worlds. Reading is in fact a rich and multimodal, embodied simulation (Gallese 2017a, b). The reader is prompted to use all the senses to imagine both well-known environments and unfamiliar ones, worlds both real and fictional. In Hauge's poems, the student faces both an animated environment and human/more-than-human entanglement. Imagining this is a starting point for the development of respect for the environment. Hauge's creative use of his immediate surroundings could even be considered teaching aids for student wellbeing and the development of a more sustainable lifestyle.

A good way to enhance environmental discoveries would be to trust the richness of what Terence Cave calls pre-reflective reading: the reader's spontaneous, sensorimotor response (2016, 21). This aspect of reading, aesthetic in the word's original meaning, should be promoted in school. A student who discovers and explores the described environment using memories, associations, knowledge and all the senses, will reach a more embodied, deeper experience, and subsequently a deeper reflection, than a student hurrying into formal analysis and interpretation.

This implies an adjustment of the analytic and hermeneutic tradition in school, a tradition still in good health in spite of several decades of reader-oriented pedagogy in teacher education. In Norwegian lower-secondary classrooms, new research covering seventy-two language art lessons, shows that the teacher typically underlines the formal and generic aspects of poetry, "such as metaphors, contrast, and symbols" (Gabrielsen, Blikstad-Balas, and Tengberg 2019, 14). How the devices function in each particular poem was not given any attention, nor was the student's personal response. I suspect that this works against both student motivation and the most important affordances of the text. An adjustment of this tradition will lead the student closer to the core of poetry. Many of Hauge's poems can support such an adjustment. "To My Fingers" from *Gleanings* focuses on embodiment. The poet laments his fingers, so often forced "to slave away for a cold brain / and a dead body!" (364). If he could only refrain from writing until the fingers start whispering; "how good might my poems then be! / Then you might speak with tongues of fire!" (364).

In the short poem "Dead Tree" from *Ask the Wind*, the interpretation-oriented readers will probably find something to ponder: "The magpie has flown; / she won't build in a dead tree" (282). However, first they should notice their immediate response. Besides, the motif itself is worth exploring before reflecting on the human relevance. How does nature work, and why?

When reading “Leaf-Huts and Snow-Houses”, the first goal might be simply to cultivate the student’s literary imagination, the capacity to, as the poem puts it, “recall”, “crawl inside”, “sit listening”, and just “be there”. Following this concept where the pre-reflective, sensorimotor response is valued just as much as searching for “hidden” meanings, the student-poet could also be given the opportunity to write their own poems, using “Leaf-Huts and Snow-Houses” as their model or frame. Both reading and writing could be used as poetic passages to a sustainable imagination, offering both embodied experience and environmental entwinement.

Among literary scholars, “Leaf-Huts and Snow-Houses” is most often valued as a meta-poem, a reflection on poetry (Karlsen 1998, 128, Kittang 1994, 123). Ordinary readers, on the other hand, – at least my first-semester teacher students – seldom dwell upon such self-referential dimensions. I would argue that the reason is not only their limited experience with literature, but also that the poem’s most salient qualities, triggering the readers’ immediate response, lie in the specific memories of leaf-huts and snow-houses, not in the house of words imagined by the poet. What is most important here? The *imaginative discourse* – the memories – is in fact part of the meta-poetic architecture. Nevertheless, the reader may overlook this poetic self-reflection, and still appreciate the poem. Without imagination, on the other hand, triggered by the description of memories, we have no poem at all.

Hauge’s comments on the text–nature relationship in Japanese and Chinese poetry reveal a similar appreciation of the literary detail: “the small and large events” (2016, 333) instead of speculation. In Chinese poetry, he writes, “it is always a specific landscape being described, with place names, season, everything voiced precisely. Never do you find generalization that ends in moralizing!” (333). His own version could be the short “Today I Sensed” from *Droplets*. The poet leaves his house, sensing that he has made a good poem: “When I came outside, the birds were singing in my garden / and the sun was shining joyously over the Bergafjell” (257). In a journal entry dated January 5, 1985, he praises the Chinese poets again: “Oh, those long rivers, with their birds and boats, but first and foremost the stars!” (375). In the next line Hauge is home again, noting this: “The starlings have arrived.”

Should we quit interpretation altogether, and only enjoy pre-reflective reading? This is not what I recommend, and besides, it would be impossible. Notice Sejersted’s comment that the “things” depicted by Hauge, without exception, are animated and filled with feelings. Just as relevant, he could not help it, he once explained (Sejersted 2007, 200). Turning to cognitive poetics, we might add that this is just the way humans are, whether poets or ordinary readers.

The human species think this way, relying on analogy and metaphor, even in pre-reflective reading. In any case, we rely on our literary body-and-mind (Lakoff and Turner 1989, Turner 1996). Consequently, interpretation and counter intuitive reading (Cave 2016, 21-24), should not be eradicated. Pre-reflective cognition actually calls for it, even if plain answers are often difficult to find.

One example is Hauge's self-examination in "The Golden Cock" from *Slowly the Woods Redden*, one of his most famous poems. At first glance, it may seem plain. Despite this, it is mysterious (Kittang 1994, 119). In the sonnet's first stanza, the persona is resisting the hollow sound of his sold soul: "I was long dead. / Dead inside my shell, / and I crowed like the golden cock of Constantinople" (125). However, a dream paradoxically shakes him awake. Suddenly he is a child again, at home; the house is asleep; the moon shines on the floorboards. His heart is beating with joy and he hears a wordless call. In the last stanza, however, we learn that this deep felt return from vanity and greed, does not last for long: "From beyond the room, grief sounds its heavy clapper. / Then the dream releases me. In my golden belt / I once more crowed for the Emperor and swore."

Both Atle Kittang (1994, 119-123), Ole Karlsen (1998) and Staffan Söderblom (2006, 183-185) offer deep and sensitive readings of the poem. Thinking counter-intuitively, they put forward many thought-provoking questions, for instance: Who is the one calling without words? The sleeping mother or father? The child? Or maybe rather the moon – often associated in Hauge's poetry with absence, loneliness and sorrow? No reader, even the most advanced, can exhaust the meaning-potential. Nevertheless, even an inexperienced reader can imagine the scene, can reflect on it, and ask eye-opening questions.

### **Sustainable discourses**

Although the *imaginative counterdiscourse* is essential, Zapf's remaining modes should also be mentioned. The *culture-critical metadiscourse*, the deconstruction of hegemonic ideologies implicit in the work, is perhaps not self-evident in Hauge's poetry. He has several explicit political poems, criticizing the Korean and the Vietnam War. However, more relevant in this mode is the implicit critique and the cultural self-reflection and self-examination (Zapf 2016, 103).

Returning to "Leaf-Huts and Snow-Houses", perhaps this poem could qualify as a *culture-critical metadiscourse* because it lets us experience, although vicariously, a childhood marginalised in a world dominated by adults. "The Golden Cock" is a more obvious, however

also more challenging, example. The poem criticises official art – and the artist himself as a dead, sold soul. The critique is mirrored in the form. The poet is both using and challenging the traditional architectonics of the sonnet (Karlsen 1998, 128, 138; Kittang 1994, 122-123). Typographically it seems to comply with the French-Italian tradition, whereas the rhyme patterns are English and Shakespearian (Kittang, 120). In addition, a tension between form and content is salient. The golden cock of Constantinople may symbolise the strict form, but the dream challenges this order, wakening the persona from his shell – until “grief sounds its heavy clapper” (125). In the last line, the persona is dead again, “I once more crowed for the Emperor and swore” (125). Poetry itself seems to be at stake. For a moment, the poet’s quest for order and coherence is suppressed, realising a mysterious presence of child memories, joy and a sorrow.

The *reintegrative interdiscourse* applies more to Hauge’s work in general. Within my perspective, the animation of the non-human world and human–non-human entanglement, are the most important forms of reintegration. Opposing modern, dualistic thinking, the poems challenge dominant cultural models, trying to bring together what modernity – at least since Descartes – has separated (Plumwood 1993, 41-68); reality and madness, body and mind, manual labour and art, human and more-than-human, place and space, culture and nature.

So, what kind of lesson does Hauge offer the young reader? Most importantly, that a life shut off from fellow beings is full of sorrow. A sustainable life, on the contrary, is to take part in a diverse environment, shaped by both humans and more-than-humans. When choosing texts, the teacher should look for poems that reflect on both alienation and fellowship, exploring the passages from Self to Other (both humans and more-than-humans). Zapf’s model for sustainable texts can be used for identifying good candidates: Does the poem enhance our imagination? Does it offer the reader a culture-critical self-reflection? Is there a reintegration of what is usually kept apart? From an ecocritical perspective, such criteria might contribute to a necessary re-evaluation of the literary curriculum. Regarding the student, the pre-reflective aspects of reading should be valued as an important text-to-world passage, but without replacing reflection. The ecocritic Richard Kerridge recommends a balance, “between interpreting a storm or an owl in a literary work in metaphorical and symbolic terms (what does it represent?), and interpreting it directly and literally, as a real living owl (it represents itself, primarily)” (2012, 13). Hauge had a deep understanding of his environment. A similar engaged exploration in poetry and life will favour the reader. This leads both teachers and students towards a nature–culture beyond the classroom, towards literary education and life

immersed “with the whole of our being in the currents of a world-in-formation: in the sunlight we see in, the rain we hear in and the wind we feel in” (Ingold 2011, 129). From “behind the mountain of solitude”, Hauge reminds us: “You cannot shine / entirely alone” (2016, 84).

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<sup>1</sup> This is why I only cite extracts from the poems, and in English translation. For the definitive Norwegian versions, see *Dikt i samling* (Hauge 1994). In English, several selections of Hauge's poems are available (Hauge 2008, 1990, 1985). I use the latest and most comprehensive collection translated by Olav Grinde; *Luminous Spaces. Selected Poems & Journals* (Hauge 2016).

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