

*Danmarkshistorier:*  
National Imagination and Novel  
in Late Twentieth-Century Denmark

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I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by me, that the work is my own, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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## Abstract

### *Danmarkshistorier*: National Imagination and Novel in Late Twentieth-Century Denmark

This thesis centres on the contemporary Danish novel as a conduit for national imagining. Chapter one begins with a discussion of Benedict Anderson's account of the ability of novels to facilitate an imagining of the national community in time and space. Critical responses to Anderson's hypothesis are then situated in the context of late twentieth-century debates on the 'postnational' and 'posthistorical'. Recent Danish historiography attempts to negotiate national histories that recognise not only the contingency of established historical accounts but also their narrative nature, employing textual strategies such as resisting linear chronology and causality, historicising space and place, and fusing (individual) memory and (collective) history. Such texts, hybrid narratives between histories and stories of Denmark (or *Danmarkshistorier*), implicate a Danish national model reader who is alive both to the homogenising contemporary discourse of *danskhed* (Danishness) and to its self-ironising subversion.

Contemporary Danish literature, it is argued, shares this concern with what Bhabha identifies as the symbiosis of nationalist historical pedagogy and narrative performance. Chapters two to four focus on three novels which map out the Danish experience of the twentieth century and sit at the intersection of the genres which have marked Danish literature in the 1990s: the *punkroman* and the encyclopedic novel. Thus all three texts explore temporalities alternative to Anderson's interpretation of Benjamin's 'homogenous empty time', and they construct shifting textual communities of national subjects predicated on the liminalities of cultural identities, on the boundaries between historical fact and fiction, and on the tension between privileged and marginal forms of narrative. In chapter two, Peter Høeg's *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* (1988) is discussed as an anthropological novel which pastiches postcolonial and magical realist writing to critique the longing for order inherent in national historiography and fiction. Peer Hultberg's *Byen og verden* (1992) is read, in chapter three, as a spatial history of a community in which local, national and global places and times of belonging can coalesce. Chapter four examines the configurations of individual and collective memory, trauma and event, the epochal and the everyday in Vibeke Grønfeldt's *I dag* (1998). The thesis concludes with a discussion of the novels in question as sites of textual memory, in which 'postnational' spacetimes, including the term of the millennium and the glocal, can be negotiated.

For Mum, Dad, and Elizabeth Anne, with love,

and

in memory of Ben Voysey

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## **Appendix**

‘“Vi æder vores eget lort”: Scatology and Eschatology in Peter Høeg’s *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*’. Paper published in *Scandinavica* 41:1 (May 2002), pp37-59



## Introduction

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1995; 1972: 130), Foucault reminds us that we can never describe our own Archive – ‘the accumulated existence of discourses’ (Foucault 2000: 289) – because we are caught up in it; we cannot understand objectively the very system of rules that informs our analysis of the same. Peter Høeg’s most famous heroine, Smilla Jaspersen, is condemned by this paradox to slip ceaselessly between ethnic identities:

‘Der er én måde at forstå en anden kultur på. At *leve* den. At flytte ind i den, at bede om at blive tålt som gæst, at lære sig sproget. På et eller andet tidspunkt kommer så måske forståelsen. Den vil da altid blive ordløs. Det øjeblik man begriber det fremmede, mister man trangen til at forklare det. At forklare et fænomen er at fjerne sig fra det. (Høeg 1992: 184, emphasis in original)

In attempting to describe how contemporary Danish ‘nationness’ is conducted and interrogated through fiction, I am all too aware that I am at once too close to and too far removed from *danskhed* effectively to possess it. Like the novels that sit at its core, my project must approach the problem of reading and writing the nation obliquely. In writing of/on the Danish national narrative, I, too, am narrating it. And time is of no help; the pastness of the past is now too dog-eared for us to accept that chronological distance, any more than geographical remoteness, can clarify our vision and allow us to apprehend the other, be it the past, or another culture, as anything more than (to quote Smilla again) ‘en forlortet projektion af den vestlige kulturs had til sine egne skygger’ (Høeg 1992: 184).

All three novels in this study have ‘kaldt på fortiden’ (Høeg 1999: 334) as a means of coming to terms with the present and the future. These are ‘contemporary’ novels not

so much in the sense that they are recent – they are receding into an already distant decade – but rather because their ground zero is the present day; they are less historical novels than historiographical novels, by which I mean they are concerned not so much with the re-presentation of a historical period as with how history can be grasped and written. And this concern marks them as products and producers of their own historical context. The old historicist suspicion that the past is ordered contingently according to the needs of present historians is no longer enough; nor is the new historicist recognition that literary texts are implicated in their own historical context, and ‘mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural formations’ (Brannigan 1998: 3). In telling histories and stories of *danskhed*, these novels are also self-consciously caught up in its ongoing negotiation. What is at stake at the end of the twentieth century, as nationalisms return to haunt Europe and Denmark, is the possibility of imagining other ways of thinking national histories – other national times and spaces – while acknowledging the impossibility of escaping from one’s own *nationalfølelse*. I want to argue that these Danish novels are one conduit of a nascent re-negotiation of nationness on these terms.

Benedict Anderson’s emphasis on the role of the novel in the development of a national imagination in nineteenth-century Western Europe, and then, by extension, the colonised world, is the starting point for the present study. It is so not despite, but because of, the welter of criticism and debate that his most famous book – *Imagined Communities* – has engendered since its first publication in 1983, and the appearance of a revised edition in 1991. *Imagined Communities* can be seen as a key text in the (re)turn to history in the humanities from the early 1980s onwards, as well as a response to separate but related developments in the philosophy of history, pulling

both these developments into the sphere of the problem of nationalism, a phenomenon discredited by National Socialism half a century ago, but which has refused to die.

The same phenomenon – self-conscious reflection on the Danish national identity – is apparent in contemporary popular cultural discourse in Denmark, as well as in the academic fields of cultural studies, history, and so on. The last decade has seen a welter of publications analysing not only what ‘Danishness’ consists in, but also how ‘Danishness’ began: the most salient example is Thorkild Borup Jensen’s *Dansk Identitetshistorie* (1993). However, the same soul-searching has been in evidence in the press, and never more so than since the referendum on the European Single Currency in September 2000. One Danish commentator concluded just after the vote to reject participation in the Euro that the subsequent wave of national self-analysis by self-appointed *nationalpsykologer* boiled down to the fact that: ‘[d]et specielt danske er, at vi har den slags specialister’ (Kastholm Hansen 2000). The self-reflexive twist in this statement neatly sums up the ironic *nationalfølelse* which the historian Uffe Østergård (1992: 55) sees as constituent of the Danish brand of nationalism.

This study will tend to adopt the term *postnational* in order to express this sense of self-reflexiveness in the face of the atavistic revenance of nationalism in the West. The prefix ‘post’ does not necessarily indicate an after, but rather a beyond; we have passed the point where the genealogical narratives of the nation can be lived out entirely credulously. A related point is that the term *nationalism* is not used synonymously with *nationness*; the latter term (Bhabha 1994) lacks the potentially aggressive connotations of the former, denoting only an imagined quality of belonging to a particular spacetime. Concomitantly, the debate in historiography of

the last decade on the 'brug og misbrug' of history (Bryld 2001) leads us into a situation where the so-called 'End of History' (Fukuyama 1992) has been negotiated not as the end of time or the cessation of events but of a crisis of narrative and meaning within the discipline, and the exploration of these doubts in fiction. The symbiosis of historiography and fiction is crucial to the present study, so much so that the term 'hi/story' will be adopted throughout, whenever the context calls for a word that encapsulates the Danish splicing of 'history' and 'story' in *historie*.

Two principles, in particular, have come to permeate the study. Firstly, the dialectic of order and chaos that informs the contemporary cosmopolitan nation as well as postmodernity itself works against a simple slide into the dogma of pluralism or heterogeneity. Secondly, discourses and perceptions of space, time, culture and history are seen as more significant than quantitative and qualitative socio-cultural changes. With Middleton and Woods, I have in mind a seismographic function of the novel, which can often 'catch a glint' (2000:135) of emergent cultural forms, beliefs and practices. It is in this sense that the novel is treated as a conduit for national imagining.

Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of Benedict Anderson's account of the ability of novels to facilitate an imagining of the national community in time and space. Critical responses to Anderson's hypothesis are then situated in the context of late twentieth-century debates on the 'postnational' and 'posthistorical'. Recent Danish historiography attempts to negotiate national histories that recognise not only the contingency of established historical accounts but also their narrative nature, employing textual strategies such as resisting linear chronology and causality,



historicising space and place, and fusing (individual) memory and (collective) history. Such texts, hybrid narratives between histories and stories of Denmark (or *Danmarkshistorier*), implicate a Danish national model reader who is alive both to the homogenising contemporary discourse of *danskhed* (Danishness) and to its self-ironising subversion.

Contemporary Danish literature, it is argued, shares this concern with what Bhabha identifies as the symbiosis of nationalist historical pedagogy and narrative performance. Chapters 2 to 4 focus on three novels which map out the Danish experience of the twentieth century and sit at the intersection of the genres which have marked Danish literature in the 1990s: the *punkroman* and the encyclopedic novel. Thus all three texts explore temporalities alternative to Anderson's interpretation of Benjamin's 'homogenous empty time', and they construct shifting textual communities of national subjects predicated on the liminalities of cultural identities, on the boundaries between historical fact and fiction, and on the tension between privileged and marginal forms of narrative. In chapter 2, Peter Høeg's *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* (1988) is discussed as an anthropological novel which pastiches postcolonial and magical realist writing to critique the longing for order inherent in national historiography and fiction. Peer Hultberg's *Byen og verden* (1992) is read, in chapter 3, as a spatial history of a community in which local, national and global places and times of belonging can coalesce. Chapter 4 examines the configurations of individual and collective memory, trauma and event, the epochal and the everyday in Vibeke Grønfeldt's *I dag* (1998). The thesis concludes with a discussion of the novels in question as sites of 'prosthetic' textual memory, in which

postnational spacetimes, including the term of the millennium and the ‘glocal’, can be negotiated.

Parts of chapters 1 and 5 have already appeared in an earlier form in the article ‘“Vi æder vores eget lort”’: Scatology and Eschatology in Peter Høeg’s *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*’, in *Scandinavica* 41:1 (May 2002). Elements of chapter 4 are forthcoming as ‘Stille eksistenser: Silence, Language and Landscape in Grønfeldt, Greig and Warner’ in the proceedings of the symposium *Centring on the Peripheries*, University of Edinburgh, March 2002.

Note on sources:

All Scandinavian sources are cited in the original language. Sources in all other languages are cited in the published English translation, except where indicated.

## Chapter 1

### **The Textual Life of Danes:**

#### **Fiction, Historiography and the National Imagination**

‘Historien er en gåde, der ikke kan fortælles, før den er tolket; men de, der skal fødes, og de, der skal dø, kan stadig nå at veksle et blik, så spild ikke dette ukendte tidsrum i den permanente nutids palads’ (Søren Ulrik Thomsen: ‘Triptykon til Tramp’. *Hjemfalden* 1991: 42)

‘By Arts is formed that great Mechanical Man called a State, foremost of the Beasts of the Earth for Pride’ (Alasdair Gray: *Lanark* 1981: 355)

#### **1. *Imagined Communities***

Almost every study drawing on Benedict Anderson’s seminal, seductive and yet problematic text *Imagined Communities* (1983, revised edition 1991) begins by lauding its fundamental insight into ‘one of the essential issues of our epoch’ (Smith 1999: 3) – and this dissertation is no exception. Anderson’s book articulated what now seems a blindingly obvious truth: that the phenomenon of nationalism is not only ubiquitous, but also a cultural construct. Put differently, the identification with a nation, or indeed with any other community ‘larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these)’ (Anderson 1991: 6) requires an act of individual and collective imagining.

In contemporary Western Europe, of course, the mantra of *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* has been largely superseded by other succinct expressions of national belonging such as ‘We’re red, we’re white, we’re Danish dynamite’. But the will to die for the fatherland and the will to follow the national football team both depend on identification with fellow citizens - the vast majority of whom one is unlikely ever to meet - who must be imagined as sharing characteristics and values by virtue of their membership of the national community.

A complex of observations is fundamental to Anderson's map of how the national community is imagined. This complex was first laid down in *Imagined Communities*, and has, more recently, been refined by Anderson himself in the collection of essays *The Spectre of Comparisons* (1998). Certain theorists, including Jonathan Culler, Homi K. Bhabha and Cairns Craig, have fleshed out and torn apart particular aspects of Anderson's original thesis. What runs like a red thread through *Imagined Communities*, as it does the present study, is the necessity of a certain conception of time, and, by extension, space, for the imagining of the modern nation, and the concomitant symbiosis of literary and national narratives. The spatial dimension of imagining is important but, arguably, secondary for Anderson, although his later (1998) turn to the idea of bound and unbound seriality of icons in the national imagination takes on a more spatial tinge.

The association of a particular sense of time and space with a particular society or era is absolutely in tune with postmodernist attempts to chart the shift from modern to postmodern in terms of time-space compression (Harvey 1990, Jameson 1991); the obsession with time is, as it were, 'of its time'. The function of the novel in the process of nation-building constitutes only one flank of Anderson's thesis, but it brings together his arguments on the importance of, on the one hand, print capitalism and, on the other, the cognitive processes involved in the reception of culture; as we shall see, however, the move from page to action remains hazy. Harvey's insistence that conceptions of spacetime are created through 'material practices and processes which serve to reproduce social life' (1990: 204) can, however, serve as a basic link between novel and action, if we think of the production and circulation of literature as

just such a material practice or process. The inclusion of literature in social networks and in bodily practices will be discussed in more depth in chapter 4.

In what follows, *Imagined Communities* and its intertexts are considered in more detail, serving as a springboard to a discussion of how the nation is written and read in what is often claimed to be a ‘postnational’ and ‘posthistorical’ era, an era in which the nineteenth-century consciousness of time and history so central to Anderson’s emerging national communities is, allegedly, dead – but still haunts the popular imagination. Towards the end of the twentieth century, in a small northern-European nation, can the novel, however that genre is negotiated, still be a seismograph of cultural conceptions of the national community – or communities – in which it is produced and consumed? Is fiction, as Peter Middleton and Tim Woods have recently argued, ‘able to mobilise emergent metaphors and rhetorical forms which have not yet become established enough to register on sociological screens’ (2000: 278)? Even if the persistence and, indeed, resurgence of national and nationalist discourses in the last decades of the twentieth century are not at issue, it is hardly controversial to posit that the imaginary map of the contemporary nation is contextualised and compromised by spacetimes other than Anderson’s ‘sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time’ (1991: 26). What the causes and characteristics of these ‘emergent’ spacetimes might be is a central concern of the present study. Taking in turn what may be considered the ‘pillars’ of *Imagined Communities* and *The Spectre of Comparisons* – the temporal, spatio-serial and historical dimensions of the national imagination – we can begin to trace the contours of the late twentieth-century (post)national spacetime, before going on to consider the most problematic aspect of Anderson’s thesis: how, in his words, ‘fiction *seeps*

*quietly and continuously into reality*, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations' (1991: 36, my emphasis). First, though, we should consider how the phenomenon of the national has itself shifted from 'pillar' of the historical imagination to yet another 'post': the postnational. What follows is not an attempt to draw an exhaustive map of the parameters of the national imagination; it is, rather, meant as an overview of the problems and paradoxes associated with the study of nations and nationalism, and, particularly, of the questions that this field of historical and sociological investigation throws up for literary and cultural studies.

### **1.1. Becoming (post)national**

The heading of this section plays on the title of one of the welter of critical, cross-disciplinary studies of nations and nationalism that appeared in the 1990s: *Becoming National* (Eley & Suny 1996). Among the contributions to this volume was an essay on the role of the Danish peasantry in the development of national identity in Denmark, by Uffe Østergård, arguably the leading, and certainly the most widely-read, historian of Danish nationness. Østergård's project in the 1990s has been a debunking of the myths of monolithic Danishness as part and parcel of a crusade on Eurosceptics. While Østergård's two major texts of the last decade, *Europas ansigter* (1992) and *Europa: Identitet og identitetspolitik* (1998), situate Danish history in a European and global context, their beating heart is a re-evaluation of the process of national identity creation in the nineteenth century; the Danish case as the exception that proves the rule.

## 1.2. Imaginary and imagined nations

The term ‘the rule’, of course, must be used advisedly, for the flurry of academic interest (leaving aside popular interest for the moment) in nations and nationalism in recent decades has suffered from a fundamental split, which in essence is an ideological chasm produced by the subtle and shifting line in the sand between *nationalism* and *nationness*. Most historians and sociologists are agreed that modern nationalism emerged from the political and cultural wake of the French Revolution. However, a major point of dissension is whether, in Ernest Gellner’s witticism, nations have navels (Gellner 1997: 90ff). That is, whether modern nations are a product of (and integral to) the various dynamics of modernity, or whether their contemporary manifestation is based on some social practice with its roots much further back in time than 1789. If nations come into being all at once, created, like Adam, by God (in this case the god of modernity), they have no metaphorical navel to bear witness to their mysterious ancestral emanation from the swamp of evolution and time immemorial. The passion aroused by the mother- or fatherland, according to Gellner, is a function of the curious mix of educational standardisation and industrial specialisation of modern states, their provision of the possibility of social mobility and civic (if not class) equality within well-defined linguistic and cultural parameters (McCrone 1998: 65-7). In other words, the conditions peculiar to the modern western state are also the ideal conditions for a burgeoning awareness of a community much larger than the primordial village of face-to-face contact.

On the other side of the great divide, naturally, the insistence on the realness of pre-existing cultural roots has its more extreme manifestations outside the academy, for the seductiveness of the eternal nation, the comforting narrative of belonging, has

never lost its appeal. For the invention of *national* belonging, we might look to Herder's fostering of the idea of the innate – and equal - individuality of nations, rooted in their pre-literate 'folk' culture and language, as a reaction against the cosmopolitanism of French state nationalism (Østergård 1992: 86-9). Hence the trope of the re-discovery or 'awakening' of cultural heritage that found expression in the Europe-wide romantic craze for folk-tales, traditions, ancient history and mythology, and especially 'national' languages in the nineteenth century. The consequent tension between rural practices and urban consumers of its bowdlerised expressions has been the subject of recent scholarship on nation-building, which tends to emphasise a 'top-down' dynamic whereby elite culture adapts existing practices, committing them to paper, and disseminating them through developing channels of mass education in literacy, history and geography, thus forming a network of 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983) and the routine flags of 'banal nationalism' (Billig 1995).

Danish historians have found ample evidence for this kind of process in the nineteenth century. Østergård concentrates on the legacy of N.F.S.Grundtvig, whose conception of *folkelighed* was couched in a voluntary belonging but nevertheless echoed Herder's essentialism in its appeal to eternal national authenticities such as language, nature and history (1992: 63). Grundtvig's influence is interpreted as essential to the development of contemporary Danish national identity via his popular writings, the system of popular education (*folkehøjskoler*) he patronised, and the consequent self-confidence and self-possession of the Danish *bønder* which enabled them to influence and ally with the urban liberal and, later, working classes, marking out the development of social democracy in Denmark as extraordinarily non-conflictual (51-



83). It also serves as a challenge to the modernists' tendency to see mass education as a state apparatus. While Østergård admits that a reliable method of evaluating the qualitative and quantitative influence of the Danish *folkehøjskoler* in the construction of Danish national identity eludes him (79), it is undeniable that their promotion of autodidacticism within an organic network of social and political movements using Grundtvigianism as 'inspirationskilde' (69) rather than organising force is a unique phenomenon that has resulted in a homogenising cultural and political discourse of nationalism that can be seen to have spread from the rural classes to the bourgeoisie (61), rather than in the reverse direction. This is at least as impressive a deviation from the modernist assumption of the contemporaneous triad of state education, industrialisation and nationalism as McCrone's observations that industrialisation in England anticipated mass schooling by a decade (1998: 14), and that in Scotland a nationalist movement lagged behind compulsory education by two centuries (83).

Another leading Danish historian, Søren Mørch, whose work *Den sidste Danmarkshistorie* is discussed in more detail in 3.6 below, also makes much of the construction of a lingering set of myths about Danish national identity during the period (for him, 1830 – 1855) that has come to be known as the Golden Age of Danish art and culture. The landscapes of Skovgaard and Lundbye, and the stories of Blicher that were produced during this period, muses Mørch, have cost the Danish tax-payer a fortune because they established an eternal image of national Nature that resembles the landscape as it was in the Golden Age, but must be artificially preserved against the tendencies of local flora: '[d]et naturlige er nemlig det, der var her i Guldalderen, ikke noget der bare vokser frem af sig selv,' he comments wryly (1996: 85).

The prevalence of national identities is thus often explained as a kind of trick, a duping of common people by the state apparatus or an intellectual elite. Implicit in this kind of modernist-constructivist theory is another variety of the same tension between elite and masses: the claim that current academic analysis ‘knows better’ than the unreconstructed nationalists. Of course, the academic discourse is still caught up in the embarrassment of a tardy realisation that national identity and nationalism – as the ideological expression of such basic (be)longing – was not merely an atavistic emotion that would disappear like fascism.

Benedict Anderson is able to dissect Gellner’s stance by insisting that nations may be imagined, but they are not ‘imaginary’ or entirely ‘fabricated’, no less ‘true’ than other types of community (Anderson 1992: 6). However, while Anderson’s presentation of the complex of dynamics present at the birth of modern nationalism may at first glance seem more ‘romantic’ than Gellner’s, *Imagined Communities* stands on the same side of the modernist versus primordialist debate alluded to above; and it is perhaps not insignificant that the first edition of Anderson’s book appeared in the same year, 1983, as Gellner’s key text on nationalism, *Nations and Nationalism*. However, Anderson is more explicitly interested in the mirage thrown up by modern nationalism: ‘[i]t is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny’ (Anderson 1991: 12). In particular, this mirage is concerned with continuity: it projects the nation into the past as well as into the future. It takes on, but does not necessarily supersede, the role of religion in turning ‘fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning’ (11). How this national temporality intertwines with fictional and historical narratives of the nation will be crucial to the present study.

### 1.3. Post-Anderson? Smith and Ethno-symbolism

Both Gellner and Anderson, and a long line of other national theorists, are criticised by Anthony D. Smith for various failings. Gellner and other ‘modernists’, for whom the nation is ‘socially and politically determined’ (Smith 1999: 169), he argues, fail to account for ethno-nationalist movements which post-date the formation of states. In such cases, ‘national’ feeling represents a form of cultural revolt against existing state structures, not a necessary corollary to the existence of the modern state.

‘Postmodernists’ such as Anderson, on the other hand, are dismissed as purveyors of nihilistic play that reduces the nation to ‘a communion of imagery, nothing more nor less’ (170). The delusion shared by both groups, then, is that nations are exclusively products and vessels of modern conditions such as print-capitalism and political mobilisation. Both approaches, says Smith, ‘fail to see the ways in which these conditions operate, not on some *tabula rasa* population, but on varying degrees and kinds of *pre-formed* populations.’ (171, my emphasis)

This assessment seems drastically to underestimate the complexities of human participation that Gellner and Anderson see in the concepts of ‘society’ and ‘text’ that they base their theories on. It falls into the trap that Anderson is so careful to avoid: the assumption that a nation is a special kind of community that is imagined in a different way to the familial, local and religious communities that obtained earlier in human history. While the interest of Gellner and his modernist colleagues was primarily to ascertain how the modern nation-state functioned politically, Anderson’s project has a broader remit: to explore human communal imagining not as an ideology like liberalism or fascism but as a more general instinct like kinship or religion

(Anderson 1991: 5). Østergård is good at overcoming the apparent incompatibility of these two schools to reveal national consciousness as a modern development of earlier group identities, not a conjuring out of thin air:

‘Kan man således ikke tale om egentlig nationalfølelse endsige nationalbevidsthed før den franske revolution, må der alligevel have været en art nationalfølelse, et råstof, som nationalismen kunne tage op og artikulere i en sammenhængende ideologi om egne fortræffeligheder og om en historisk ret over for andre folks skurkagtighed og uret.’ (1992: 59)

The assumption of continuity on the basis of existing ‘råstof’ does not exclude Østergård’s broadly textual analysis which incorporates, for example, the Danish *sangskat*, the battery of hymns and folk songs, and the pop songs that echo them, as a fundamental part of N.F.S.Grundtvig’s contribution to the creation of Danish *mentalité*, a national feeling based on a denial of nationalism (Østergård 1992: 55-83; 1996). In contrast, when Smith ponders whether most nationalists couldn’t have told us that most national traditions are invented (1999: 170), he admits the irony of much non-aggressive nationalism, but misses the ethical import of ‘postmodernist’ approaches, which is to defuse the power of nationalism by tapping into its contradictions. The eclectic materials that Smith suggests are the stuff of ‘ethno-symbolism’ might just as well be called ‘texts’: ‘[n]ationalist intellectuals and professionals’ (177), he explains, have a task comparable to that of archaeologists, excavating layers of past national history and locating it in space and time; but the evidence they find must be ‘rediscovered’, ‘reinterpreted’ and collectively ‘regenerated’ within the confines of certain criteria. ‘Their interpretations,’ declares Smith, ‘must be consonant not only with the ideological demands of nationalism, but also with the scientific evidence, popular resonance and patterning of particular ethno-histories’ (181) – a kind of controlled nationalist semiosis. The crux of Smith’s

argument seems to be that this process is generationally-defined: ‘every generation fashions its own interpretations of national identity in the light of its reading of the ethnic past or pasts’ (17). But it still assumes a kind of ‘top-down’ imposition by an educated elite (‘nationalist intellectuals and professionals’) of interpretations on an unsuspecting populace. It is hard to see how this constitutes more than a shift of emphasis from, for example, Anderson’s explanation of how the European colonialists in Southeast Asia began, in the late nineteenth century, to incorporate the local sacred sites into the map of their colony, to reconstruct them as monuments and open them as historical sites for tourists. ‘Museumized in this way, they were repositioned as regalia for a *secular* colonial state’, and, after independence, such ‘ethno-national symbolism’, as Smith would call it, was maintained by the new regime according to its needs (Anderson 1991: 182-3).

Lastly, Smith’s ostensible insistence on the collective participatory element in the construction of national hi/story echoes Homi K. Bhabha’s (1994) powerful idea of the people as subjects of the national narrative, this ‘performative’ dimension working in symbiosis with a ‘pedagogical’ dimension that has the people as narrative objects – but, puzzlingly, Smith summarily dismisses Bhabha’s model as not sufficiently complex to account for these generational changes. Bhabha’s essay, ‘DissemiNation’, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), is central to the present study, and, I will argue, is extremely useful and flexible in helping us to think beyond the chronological (or, indeed, generational) temporality that constitutes a straightjacket for national(ist) narratives. Bhabha’s ‘double time of the nation’ is discussed in more depth in section 2.1.2 below, but the idea is also, regardless of Smith’s dismissal of it, able to incorporate in a flexible model the dialogue between authority and the everyday,

between power and resistance, in the contemporary nation. It is therefore able to embrace one of the most frustrating paradoxes of nationness and nationalism, which is identified, but perhaps over-simplified, by Anderson: the ‘objective modernity of nations to the historian’s eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists’ (1991: 5). Even the theorist of nationalism has a national identity, and participates in what Bhabha describes as the ‘liminal signifying space’ of the nation, ‘*internally* marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference.’ (1994: 148, emphasis in original). We can afford to discount neither the situatedness of national theory, nor the strength of the contestatory politics of identity of which recent neo-nationalisms are one manifestation.

#### **1.4. The situatedness of theory**

One literary critic, writing about contemporary German literature, asserts that everyone is now ‘in on the joke’ about the constructed nature of the nation, but this seems somewhat premature as a diagnosis of the *Zeitgeist* (Peysner 1999: 245). Nevertheless, a discernible shift has taken place in critical studies of the nation which go beyond Smith’s reaction against the exclusion of ‘pre-formed populations’ from constructivist theories of nation-building, and this shift must be seen to grow out of Anderson’s focus on the imagination. Paltí locates the concern of *Imagined Communities* not in ‘the nation *qua* ideological construction’ but in ‘the very subject of such a construction [...] trying to account for how it is formed’ (2001: 342). The antigenealogical view of the nation, then, is no longer in question for all but the most recidivist nationalists; what is at stake is the ‘processes and mechanisms that generate

and diffuse such myths' (337), a 'second order' object of study. The subject of the community is anything but 'pre-formed'; rather, it is engaged in a constant oscillation between (implicit or explicit) knowledge of the contingency of the existing nation and participation of the ongoing creation of the nation in the contemporary world. Put differently, the heralds of academic reason will not, ultimately, exorcise nationalism or convert the so-called unreflective everyday practitioners of national identity (although justification for studying the phenomenon is often couched in terms of urgency, given the 'resurgence' of aggressive nationalisms in the postcolonial and post-communist worlds), but will surely have the effect of making their practices more nuanced, an assumption which is inherent in the present dissertation. Østergård's jaunty take on the Danes' cool narcissism indicates how a hybrid, or ironic, national identity might be thought:

'I 1970'erne blev det af mange grunde igen legitimt at tale om Danmark, danskere og det danske. Oftest med selvironisk distance – selvfølgelig. Det ligner os. Den uhøjtidelige måde at være uhøjtidelig og højstemt på og den ikke-nationalistiske måde at være national på er netop et særkende ved danskernes danskhed.' (1992: 55)

On the other hand, Claus Bryld identifies a sea-change, later on in the 1990s, from this carefree ironic nationness to a more reflective mood, in the wake of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of Denmark's liberation from Nazi Occupation in 1945. The mood of the jubilee itself was, thinks Bryld, still overwhelmingly 'patriotisk og konsensuspræget', but certain debates as to the most suitable theme, or message, of the commemorative activities opened up some cracks in the apparently 'unisonant' Occupation narrative. While Bryld modestly points to a broad church of factors leading to a more nuanced impression of the Occupation years in the popular imagination after 1995, he also shows how academic intervention in the public sphere

can have a snowball effect. Together with Anette Warring, Bryld published in 1998 a hefty tome, *Besættelsestiden som kollektiv erindring*, which collates post-war materials to produce a wide-ranging study of cultural responses to the Occupation as myth and narrative. The book was able to make a significant contribution to the process of reflection on Denmark's role in the Second World War because it sparked a long-running and passionate debate in the Danish media, ensuring that subsequent research has tended also to be picked up, inciting further reflection, and so on (Bryld 2001: 41-4). The symbiosis of 'official' and 'popular' histories – narratives – of the nation is important throughout the present thesis, especially in Chapter 4; what is particularly instructive about this example is that Bryld and Warring's attempt to demonstrate the multiplicity and the textuality of hi/stories about the national past has not only itself played a role in generating more texts and hi/stories, but also, of course, constitutes another national narrative. Debate about how the nation's past has been constructed does not preclude that same debate from being conducted within an assumption of Danishness.

McCrone, in particular, is refreshingly alert to the danger of reducing nationalism and nationness to dry objects of study while denying their status as still-mutating daily practices:

'We live in an age of nationalism, but one which spends a lot of time denying that nationalism exists. The orthodoxy is that it is a virus left over from an older more vicious age, which, as if mutating itself against all known antidotes, comes back to wreak its havoc on hapless victims. Centres of power employ the common-sense that they are patriotic while their enemies are nationalistic. If we look about us, we know that this simply cannot be true. The most powerful forms of nationalism are those which operate its power while denying its existence.' (1998: vii-viii)



The last sentence in the citation above is absolutely crucial, and echoes Foucault's double-bind, the impossibility of stepping outside one's own archive to describe how it functions. As a Scot, McCrone is all too aware of the national identity he is still steeped in, and Gellner, too, was adamant that his early cultural border crossings and condition of exile influenced his research; his Czech-Jewish family emigrated from the borderlands of Bohemia to Britain in the 1930s (McCrone 1998: 65). As Foucault muses: 'I am investigating that strange and quite problematic configuration of human sciences to which my own discourse is tied. I am analyzing the space in which I speak.' (1998: 311).

### **1.5. Beyond the national? The politics of identity and difference**

The distinction between 'modernist' and 'postmodernist' theories of the nation is in many ways an artificial one, then. Both are 'antigenealogical' (Paltí 2001); both seek to explain nationness and to defuse the potency of nationalism; both recognise the modern era of print-capitalism and widespread education as a breeding ground for a particular kind of communal belonging corresponding to the demographic expanse of the modern state. Following McCrone (1998: 6, 83), though, we can identify the crux of the distinction as between the nation as 'imaginary' (Gellner / modernist) and 'imagined' (Anderson / postmodernist). Put differently, the former tends to see the nation as a symptom of the state, defining nationalism as 'a theory of political legitimacy' according to which 'ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones' (Gellner 1983: 1), that is, the dynamic of nationalism is centripetal. On the other hand, Anderson's 'imagined community' tends to see the connection between nation and state as contingent and certainly not concentric. It therefore allows for simultaneous centripetal and centrifugal national dynamics, without, however, being

able to accommodate the complex criss-crossings of subjective identities that constantly contest the unisonance that is the nation's *raison d'être* (or perhaps *raison d'état*).

Moreover, so-called postmodernist theories of the nation have hardly begun to account for the possibility of the 'postnational': the complex of economic, political and cultural developments of the late twentieth century that have both eroded the ability of the so-called nation-state to act in isolation, and heralded a proliferation of neo-nationalisms. This second observation is at the heart of the renewed interest in the national. Postcolonial liberation nationalisms were followed, in the 1990s, by postcommunist nationalisms in the old Eastern bloc, with all their attendant horrors; over the same period, the logic of economic integration gave birth to a European Union with some degree of supranational authority, which, as McCrone puts it, 'failed to resolve the contradiction between global markets and national self-determination' (1998: 2). Most nebulous of all was the identification of transformed global economic and cultural flows under the banner of 'globalisation'; transnational corporations, electronic transfer of capital, instantaneous dissemination of information and entertainment via the internet, and so on, are inimical to the state's economic, political and cultural sovereignty and thus its ability to command loyalty from the population. Jameson sees this 'new quantum leap of capital' as a further expansion of the colonial global network to a stage (late capitalism) which revokes the nation-state's 'central formal and functional role', leading to a fragmentation of consciousness and a breakdown in grass-roots politics and groupings (Jameson 1991: 412-3). Donald Pease sums up the condition of the postnational bombastically, but usefully:

‘Both globalization and postcolonialism begin with the assumption that while the nation-state may not be dead exactly, it has undergone a drastic change in role. The world economy requires socially and territorially more complex organizations than nation-states, which have subsequently become splintered rather than developmental in form. The time-bound and enclosed nation-state whose institutional form once foreclosed other possibilities has given way to more complex patterns of independence grounded in the belief that the local and the international are inextricably intertwined.’ (1997: 2)

The newness and longevity of the condition of the ‘glocal’, a term which emphasises that the renewed concern with the global and the local are two sides of the same coin, are moot. Pease goes on to ponder where the ‘postnational’ lies in history, and concludes that ‘a distinction between national and postnational narratives might be drawn at the line demarcating the temporal from the critical inflection of “aftering”.’

(3). Indeed, the prefix ‘post’ is not necessarily a temporal category; Homi Bhabha introduces *The Location of Culture* (1994) with a meditation on the *fin-de-siècle* fetish for the ‘post’, which, he says, is more of a *beyond*, a living on borderlines:

‘Our existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the “present” [...] we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion’ (1994:1)

It is not only the condition of postmodernity that has initiated global flows of workers and refugees; as Bhabha points out, this was also a feature of the colonial age and the demands of industrialisation (1994: 139). But the clamour for the right to find and assert one’s own cultural ‘identity’, be it ethnic, national, gendered, queer or diasporic, or a combination, has never been heard so loudly in the West. This state of affairs was theorised by the philosopher Charles Taylor (1992) as the development of a ‘politics of recognition’ emanating from the struggle in the US for racial equality;

one might also point to cultural and political developments in the West such as the waxing of liberal ideologies such as freedom of expression and international law on human rights, the waning of organised religion, and, again, the internationalisation and accelerated distribution of cultural representations. Bhabha finds a partial explanation in the reduction in importance of class and gender as ‘singularities’ of ‘originary’ identity, and points to the urgency of focussing on the articulation of subject positions (such as ‘race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation’) through movement and difference (1994: 1). Feminist and poststructuralist theory has provided means to think all manner of identities through difference, though Jameson fears that a politics of identity based on a voluntary (rather than imposed) difference may be so much ‘liberal tolerance’ and even just ‘fashion’ (Jameson 1991: 341). Identity in general, like national imagining, is ‘a game played with reflecting mirrors’ (McCrone 1998: 102).

The ambition of *Imagined Communities* is to trace the centripetal dynamic of the nation out of the great age of nation-building, and, accordingly, some critics have identified as a significant blind-spot its failure satisfactorily to account for voices within the nation that contest its homogenising discourse. Critical attention has focussed on the role of women and ethnic minorities within the nation, both from sociological and more broadly cultural angles, as voices contesting and constituting the community; it may well be possible to theorise the role of, say, queer or ecological interests in similar ways, but this is a task that remains to be undertaken. Another relevant observation is that studies of gendered nationness have been more common in the context of postcolonial, rather than Western, case studies (Sharp 1996).

While Yuval-Davis' monograph on *Gender and Nation* (1993) is an invaluable sociological survey of the role of gender in the construction of nationness, an article by Joanne P. Sharp (1996) has engaged directly with what she sees as Anderson's exclusion of the national woman. Moreover, thinks Sharp, Anderson's thesis is more generally 'unidirectional': it 'assumes an imagined citizen, and this citizen is gendered' (Sharp 1996: 99). The Unknown Soldier, for example, is a metonymic representation of the nation, whereas female personifications of it are incorporated only metaphorically and passively (ibid.). However, she insists, men as well as women are constructed as subjects which are not merely 'national' but a plurality of positions. Appealing to Foucault's insistence that power can never be centred or settled, Sharp suggests persuasively that the contemporary nation should be viewed as a 'discursive practice', in which power is diffuse, shifting between elite and subaltern. In such a nation, 'ruler and ruled alike, are constrained by their location in the discursive networks underwriting society' (Sharp 1996: 105). Christianson (forthcoming) makes much the same point in a recent essay on Scottish women's literature, arguing that

'[i]t is not so much that class, religion or gender intersect with nation, as that they interrogate and problematise it [...] women have always had different kinds of split demands and pulls of loyalty [...] "Scottish" is tempered or altered by "woman"'.

Christianson's persuasive cross-cutting of geographical and gendered peripheral regions of the nation speaks to the spatial dialectic within the textual or empirical nation that is discussed in chapter 3 particularly. It follows that those who stand on the margins of the mythic, signifying space of the nation are those whose counter-narratives are continually displaced by or caught up in the ongoing carnival of

identities jostling for admission to the national narrative. I do not claim that women can be unproblematically situated there; gender is just one facet of identity in the panoply of conflicting loyalties of sexuality, class, ethnicity, language, and so on, that we all – not just women – have to negotiate. It is probably not excessive to posit that the constellation of gender and religion, for example, in contemporary Denmark is at the heart of much of the popular debate on Danish identity: we might think of recent press reports on the wearing of the *hijab* by women ‘*nydanskere*’, or on alleged gang-rapes by immigrants.

Homi Bhabha has been the most prominent cultural theorist of the contestatory identities of migrant communities within the Western nation. His work crops up regularly in discussion in the present study, and will therefore not be dealt with in depth here. What Bhabha and other recent criticism such as the feminist-inspired work mentioned above bring to the study of nationness is a diversion of the gaze from the centripetal, homogenising force that nationalism constituted during the youth and heyday of the modern nation-state, towards the heterogeneous swirl of identities and discourses that nevertheless coalesce around the still-recognisable remnants of the ‘grand narrative’ of the nation.

## **2. The spatio-temporal dimension(s) of the national imagination**

This brings us to the problem of national spacetime, and how it might be imagined ‘beyond’ the heyday of the ostensibly homogeneous modern nation. As argued above, the temporal dimension of the national imagination is absolutely central to Anderson’s thesis. The mirage of the nation must be projected both downstream and upstream, if we think of time, for the moment, as a stream. In his preface to the

revised edition of *Imagined Communities*, Anderson recognises how crucial the concept of time was to his original argument, and explains how a later study convinced him of the considerable importance of space for the national imagination (1991: xiv), a consideration developed in his chapter ‘Census, Map, Museum’ and in his later work. It is also likely, as I argue in Chapter 3, that this move corresponds to a turn to space in the humanities over the last few decades. While it is a difficult and artificial exercise to discuss time and space separately, the discussion below begins by doing so, partly for reasons of organisation, and partly with the intention of moving towards the more profitable category of ‘spacetime’, as employed by Middleton & Woods (2000) in their study of history, time and space in postwar fiction: space and time, after all, are not lived distinctly, though they are often thought distinctly. The impact on the popular imagination of Einstein’s theory of relativity, which Jameson (1991: 412) regards as the inspiration for the ‘monadic relativism’ or closed-world consciousness of modernist literature, and more recently Hawking’s work (1998) on the expansion and contraction of the universe with the concomitant reversibility of time, means that traditional conceptions of dependable time and space, and their corollaries such as history and memory, are viewed with increasing unease and suspicion. For example,

‘the theory of relativity seemed to ascribe temporal difference entirely to perspective, which could be understood as merely a subjective limitation added to the mathematically formulable objective reality of a spacetime which already contained the future alongside the present and the past.’  
(Middleton & Woods 2000: 127)

For non-specialists, of course, an awareness of alternative ways to conceptualise the universe have been little more than a haunting presence in science fiction, a fantasy less authoritative than the reassuring linear time and causality of History, and the

regularities of Euclidian geometry. Middleton & Woods' point is that literature has a seismographic function; it registers emergent ideas, experiences and fantasies before sociology does (2000: 9, 135, 278). While this is less deterministic than Anderson's hypothesis that fiction 'seeps quietly and continuously into reality' (1991: 36), the two critical studies share a concern with the relationship between cognitive apprehension of spatio-temporal structures and their representation in narrative, which is also the question underlying the following discussion on the temporal and spatial dimensions of the national imagination.

### **2.1. Thinking time**

Our modern teleological view of the passage of time and of history is a radical departure from the medieval conception of 'a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present' (Anderson 1991: 24). Borrowing from Walter Benjamin, Anderson describes the modern idea of time as '“homogeneous, empty time” in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar' (ibid.). This new way to 'think' time is most neatly summed-up in the concept of 'meanwhile', and as a cognitive scheme it is most efficiently disseminated in the narrative form of the classic novel. Several developmental sub-categories of time – appropriately enough, developing through human time - are assumed in Anderson's hypothesis, which betrays the profound influence of Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, an influence still quite rare in the 1980s. The homogeneous, empty time of the prevalent modern version of imagined community – that is, the nation – captured the Western imagination for as long as the post-Enlightenment concept of historical progress reigned supreme. However, as Benjamin writes, 'any



critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself' (1999: 252). If, as Lyotard (1984) famously insisted, the postmodern condition was characterised above all by a suspicion of grand narratives (metanarratives) then linear, progressive time must be among the 'centred, totalising, masterly discourses of our culture' (Hutcheon 2002: 83) to be cast into doubt. The *narrative* character of the declaration of the end of grand narratives was quickly exposed, of course (Jameson 1991: xi-xii), but the damage was done. The representation of time in the narratives that it structures, then, is also at stake; the emphasis on the structure of fictional narrative is what has made Anderson's work so attractive, and yet so problematic, for literary theorists.

### **2.1.1. From Messianic time to homogeneous empty time**

The pre-modern religious and dynastic realms, communities of a sacred character and potentially infinite scale, Anderson posits, gave way as the new mode of making sense of change in the world started to feature in culture (1991: 22). From a medieval world in which people made sense of life and change through the Biblical system of pre-figuring and fulfilment, where events in the Old and New Testaments were linked not temporally or causally but by a mutual intensification of meaning (Anderson 1991: 22-4; Craig 1996: 216), the eighteenth-century flourishing of the novel and the newspaper, both key forms for Anderson, promoted a new way to apprehend time and society. Tellingly, Anderson has to use spatial metaphors to explain this transformation (a point I will come back to in 2.2. below): the 'simultaneity-along-time' of the mediaeval world is replaced by the simultaneity of the modern world which is 'transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar' (1991: 24).

Benjamin's *Theses*, and, in a sense, most of his work (McRobbie 1999: 96), are dedicated to defamiliarising the doxa of homogeneous, empty time which, for him, is the illusory time of progress and history, as cited above. It is the perspective of the present which projects the sequence of events into the past and makes it linear and meaningful (Benjamin 1999: 255), a lesson which has been taken to heart by cultural materialists, if not the contemporary historical academy. For Benjamin, the revolutionary historian 'stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary' and starts thinking of the present as an all-encompassing ' "time of the now" ' which is shot through with chips of Messianic time' (ibid.), and he finds inspiration for this rejection of historicism not so much in the tension between Old and New Testament but in the yet unfulfilled promise of the Torah. While the Jews were prohibited from predicting the future, he tells us, the Torah instructed them in remembrance. For them, the future was not projected out into homogeneous, empty time, as is the time of the nation; rather, the present swirled around, and 'every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter' (ibid.). But, typically for one so concerned with embedding art in contemporary society, Benjamin also finds a trace of this time in the latest findings of scientists, who explain the great age of the universe by comparing it to a twenty-four hour day, of which the history of civilisation would comprise a fraction of the final second before twelve midnight. He would also have appreciated, perhaps, the irony of the proliferation of web-sites, embedded in that strange 'real' time of the internet, that cabalistically chart the symbolic mathematics of Biblical event and current affairs in the approach to the Second Coming. And so, comments Benjamin:

‘The present, which, as a model of Messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgement, coincides exactly with the stature which the history of mankind has in the universe’ (ibid.)

We might unkindly muse that the fraction of time – barely a couple of centuries – allotted to the kind of historicism that Anderson insists is so constitutive of the imagined nation seems even more insignificant. For its hold on the popular imagination can hardly have been so total as its inclusion in the pedagogy of the modern seems to suggest; if we fixate on the universality of its power, then we merely construct another grand narrative of progress from the Messianic perception of time, through the stage of homogeneous, empty time, and forward to a postmodern multiplicity of fragmentedly experienced temporalities. In so doing, we undermine our own articulation of the constructedness of historicist accounts of progress. After all, ‘[i]n every era, the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.’ (Benjamin 1999: 247).

We must, then, look for times that are always shot through with chips of other temporalities. What of the ‘time’ of intertextuality, when Barthes warns against the cult of filiation and outlines the text as ‘woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages [...] antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony’ (Barthes 1977: 160)? When, in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, Amalie’s twenty-four (two times twelve) guests sit down to a feast, and the Baroness in attendance tells Carsten of a new tale she planned to write concerning ‘et måltid der hævdede gæsterne op i en ny sfære af frihed’ (Høeg 1999: 303), what is the relationship of this episode to Karen Blixen’s *Babettes gæstebud*, if not one of pre-figuring and fulfilment?

Common to the three novels in this study is a preoccupation with the subversion or deconstruction of time, which manifests itself in at least three forms: firstly, a thematisation of the concept of *øjeblikket*, the moment-in-time; secondly, a concern with the subjective perception of time by the individual; and thirdly, the subversion of temporal linearity. However, they are not simply concerned with problematising linear time and historical progress; they are always already cross-cut with times of difference that will not be pinned down as stages along a developmental path of progressively ‘truer’ conceptions of time.

### **2.1.2. Bhabha and the double-time of the nation**

Dialogue between different times, like different discourses, is what Homi Bhabha is concerned to trace in his essay ‘DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation’, which forms part of *The Location of Culture* (1994), but in fact pre-dates this collection by some five years. The clamour of discourses in the contemporary nation is a problem of time, he claims, because the nation is a temporal process split between the existence of a community in the present and its symbolic continuity:

‘[t]he language of culture and community is poised on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of a national past [...] How do we plot the narrative of the nation that must mediate between the teleology of progress tipping over into the “timeless” discourse of irrationality?’  
(1994: 142)

The representation of the nation-people as a totality, which is so central to Anderson’s and Gellner’s theorisation of the imaginative and political emergence of the nation, depends on metaphor and metonymy, the detail of the ‘typical’ everyday. Bhabha sees the uncanny past haunting the ‘national present’ (1994: 143), and the people emerging

as ‘a double narrative movement’ (145). In this process, the pedagogical fixing of roles in a national *telos* jostles for influence with the daily, performative iteration of life:

‘We then have a contested conceptual territory where the nation’s people must be thought in double-time; the people are the historical “objects” of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*; the people are also the “subjects” of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity: as that sign of the *present* through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process.’ (145, emphasis in original)

I quote this key passage in its entirety to demonstrate how Bhabha’s dense prose tries to practice what it preaches: the destabilisation of any linear, singular discourse or rhythm. Two broad temporalities are associated with Bhabha’s dimensions of the national narrative movement: that of the pedagogical is ‘continuist, accumulative’, and that of the performative is ‘repetitious, recursive’ (145).

It is important to Bhabha that Anderson’s homogeneous, empty time be renegotiated because, he warns, to subsume the cultural difference immanent in the national community under a simple concession of ‘the free play of polarities and pluralities’ within that same modern spacetime is to underestimate its import (162). The discourse of the deviant must be interpreted according to the logic of the supplementary question in parliament (155), ‘where adding to does not add up but serves to disturb the calculation of power and knowledge, producing other spaces of subaltern signification’ (162). Cultural difference, he goes on to argue, introduces a *temporal* shock, that of discourses that are of ‘other’ histories, ‘both at once ours and other’ (162). Cairns Craig, too, points to a world in which it is no longer satisfactory to

dismiss as ‘primitive’ all those proliferating claims, practices and identities that conflict with the West’s modern historical trajectory: ‘[t]hese are values which stand outside of history as we define it: not *after* history, or *before* it, but *beyond* it.’ (Craig 1996: 224). When the national pedagogical narrative is jarred by a dissenting voice, this comes from within and without.

Bhabha’s argument weaves its way through the present thesis, and acts as a reminder that the recognition of a rejection of grand narratives by postmodern narratives is not enough; to be ethically meaningful, conflicting discourses must *add to* a world picture, without necessarily *adding up to* a new, healed, whole.

### **2.1.3. The ‘meanwhile’**

The modern apprehension of simultaneity is, claims Anderson in a footnote, so fundamental to culture that it underlies ‘every essential modern conception’ (1991: 24, n34). This observation forms the basis for Anderson’s theory that the novel and the newspaper, both of which came into their own in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ‘provided the technical means for “re-presenting” the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation’ (25, my emphasis). There is circumstantial evidence for this effect: Anderson is dealing with a specified historical period in the development of ‘print-capitalism’, which coincides with the period from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century which, in many Western European states, saw the genesis – or at least the flowering – of a mass national identity. This is certainly the consensus of many historians in Denmark (Østergård 1992, Mørch 1996). In both the novel and the newspaper – as well as in the history book – the reader is required to conceive of a ‘meanwhile’, whether in terms of two fictional characters committing separate and

simultaneous acts to which the reader alone is privy, or in terms of a number of events reported in the same edition of a newspaper and therefore linked not thematically but only by the date on the masthead under which they are printed. In both cases, time comes to be conceptualised not only as linear and progressive but also as flowing in a national context. In this respect, we might think of time as the fourth dimension of the national space. In *The Spectre of Comparisons*, Anderson finesses the ‘interconnected principles of coherence’ that the newspaper provides for its readers. Firstly, the newspaper has as its natural realm *not* the nation in which it is published, but the world, and, secondly, events in other parts of the world are explained to the readers through a standardised vocabulary which is rooted in a principle which, by 1998, Anderson sees as fundamental to national imagining: unbound seriality. Series such as monarchs, football teams, laws, foodstuffs, indeed, nations, and so on can be explicated by cultural equivalence, or ‘domestication’ into the sphere of the native worldview, to borrow a term from Translation Studies (Venuti 1995: 15-25). This introduces a spatial and relative element to the transverse, temporal simultaneity of the newspaper.

Troubled by the neat simultaneity of Anderson’s idea of the nation as ‘a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time [...] a solid community moving steadily up (or down) history’ (1991: 26), Bhabha moves to complicate the time of the ‘meanwhile’. The trajectories of the members of this sociological organism, he insists, may be contiguous, but they are not simultaneous. He points to Anderson’s own admission of a ‘chip’ in the tunnel of time: the moment when the national language, perceived as primordial, ‘looms up imperceptibly out of a horizonless past’(Anderson 1991: 144). This, for Bhabha, is the site of the split

between It/Self, the generator of the 'double-time' of the nation: 'the "meanwhile" is the sign of the processual and performative, not a simple present continuous, but the present as succession without synchrony – the iteration of the sign of the modern nation-space' (Bhabha 1994: 159). Cairns Craig, on the other hand, shows how the modern obsession with unilinearity – the requirement, in narrative, to turn simultaneity into succession – represses the diversity of space and experience (1996: 220-1). But Craig's call for a writing of simultaneity in space, in order to make possible the claim to contiguous events, or even one and the same event, by many different intersecting narratives, makes the same appeal as Bhabha: a recognition that the nation-people can find their unity and unisonance in their very diversity, and that this diversity necessarily entails an openness to different narratives and different times in mutual dialogue.

A further problem with the 'meanwhile' arises in the attempt to assimilate Anderson's use of 'calendrical' time – as the measurement of empty, homogeneous time – to Benjamin's. In Thesis XV, Benjamin distinguishes quite explicitly between how calendars and clocks measure time. Calendars are 'monuments of a [lost] historical consciousness'; revolutions, after all, introduce new calendars, and days of revolution are remembered when that same iconic day recurs (1999: 253). Calendrical time is therefore cyclical and symbolic, as well as accumulative. It is the impulse of humankind to name, catalogue and revere significant days, just like other objects. Calendar days, too, can be national and personal monuments because they are 'chips of Messianic time' peeking through the accumulative temporality of the succeeding years. This double-time of the calendar has particular significance for the novel *I dag*, in Chapter 4, and will be revisited in that context.



#### 2.1.4. Material participation in the ‘meanwhile’

There may be forms of collective and individual participation in (national) imagining – other than the novel and the newspaper – which reveal more about what the nature of the ‘meanwhile’ may be in the national imagination, and so may help to contextualise the role of the novel in this respect. One line of enquiry, which has grown out of the general interest among Danish historians in nation-building over the last decade, is the tradition of *fællessang*. Hans Kuhn (1990) has investigated the use of popular songs of a national theme during the military campaigns against Prussia from 1848 to 1852, concluding that this phenomenon was instrumental in ‘nationalising’ the soldiers of the period. During the years of the occupation of Denmark by Nazi Germany (1940-45), nation-wide song events, such as radio-co-ordinated singing to celebrate the King’s birthday, were employed to help morale (Bryld and Warring 1998). Participation in a co-ordinated event on a nation-wide scale requires an act of the imagination, since most members of the ‘community’ of singers are unaware of each other’s existence; but the certainty of simultaneous participation (confirmed by the radio) may be expected to strengthen an awareness of what Anderson calls “simultaneity in ‘homogeneous, empty time’” (1991: 25). This is a powerful type of national imagining through participation based on the materiality of language and voice.

A similar phenomenon occurred in Denmark on 31 December 1999: the television project ‘D-Day’, a short film directed by the four Dogma Brethren in the last minutes of the year 1999 and broadcast on the evening of January 1 2000. Each filmmaker directed one of the main characters, and the action in the control room was also

filmed.<sup>1</sup> During the broadcast, viewers were invited to edit their own version of the film by ‘zapping’ between the television channels; each of the terrestrial channels and many of the cable and satellite channels available in Denmark broadcast simultaneously one of the films made the previous evening. An estimated 1.4 million viewers participated in (or at least watched) D-Day (Hjort 2001). The beginning of the new millennium, after all, is one point in the movement through calendrical time that we all focussed on to some extent (see chapter 5 for a discussion of national spacetime at the millennium).

Mette Hjort (2001) interprets the D-Day project as an instance of conscious and active simultaneous participation in the creation of a *Danmarksfilm*, although not all the Dogma Brethren agree that the project could be classified as such. Hjort argues that, although nationness is not thematised in the film (the plot concerns a bank robbery), its melding of fictional plot and real setting in real time facilitates national imagining not only through the interactive aspect of the experience, but also through its documentary character. One caveat in this respect is that the film is certainly a snapshot of the life of Copenhagen at the end of the twentieth century, but would not necessarily be perceived as representative of the rest of Denmark. National singing and national zapping share one characteristic which the reading of novels and even, to some extent, the reading of newspapers cannot match: the certainty of simultaneous participation, based on material, bodily practices and refracted back at the participant by the national broadcast media. In both instances, even if we assume that the majority of citizens did not participate, the event produces a powerful conviction that

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<sup>1</sup> The filmmakers in question are Lars von Trier, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, Thomas Vinterberg and Kristian Levring, whose cinematic ‘Vow of Chatity’, issued in 1996, has produced one film by each of the directors and various projects worldwide

a representative sample of fellow Danes were doing the same thing at exactly the same time.

Anderson's thesis about the revolutionary potential of the novel to alter the way people think about communities across time is based on a period anterior to the advent of broadcast media. If the contemporary novel is a conduit for the imagining of a national community, it is embedded in a network of other media that establish imaginative links between members of the community – and other communities – in various ways. The power of television, for example, to feed information to receptors, to mark *calendrical* time and to contribute to the participation of eventness, is a relationship explored in *I dag* and discussed in Chapter 4. However, new visual media have more profound effects on the perception of time and space, which are only beginning to be theorised, but which make implicit claims as to the nature of time which differ from those made by written narrative. As Cairns Craig succinctly summarises, in the novel, we cannot read two events simultaneously, although this effect can be synthesised in various ways on the page: 'simultaneity always has to be turned into succession: occupation of a shared space always has to turn into the occupation of differentiated moments in time.' (1996: 221). The combination of spaces experienced by the actively zapping viewer of D-Day are also experienced successively, but the visual representation of space on television and, more radically, in cyberspace, intensifies in the perceiver an awareness of a heterogeneity of spaces 'running' simultaneously through the same stretch of time, all of which can be accessed at any moment, on the viewer's whim. Indeed, for Jameson, the 'radically discontinuous' organisation of reality represented by channel switching mirrors the 'perceptual, cultural and psychic' zapping of the subject through the experiences of

postmodernity, a ‘compartmentalization of reality’ that applies to the postmodern novel just as it does to current events (Jameson 1991: 373). In many mysterious ways, then, our concept of ‘meanwhile’, which Anderson claims was fostered by the ‘old-fashioned novel’, is being transformed. I will argue that the novels considered in this thesis are beginning to respond to popular suspicions as to how ‘real’ time behaves.

## **2.2. National space**

Anderson’s modern national time can only be conceived of geometrically, as a tunnel, or, to coin a metaphor, as a kind of sausage machine moulding the heterogeneity of conflicting narratives into the relentless forward thrust of time – which can also be retrospectively understood, given meaning as the only possible direction or combination of possible outcomes for the nation’s progress through modernity towards a desirable future. But all that happens in time takes place on a particular territory, in a defined space, or, in the case of colonial adventures, flows back to that space to be given meaning. For example, in the twentieth century, the imagining of Scotland's space and history has been complicated by the nation's role in the construction of the British Empire, as Cairns Craig has argued:

‘The space of the [Scottish] nation extended tentacularly around the world, and like the ships launched on the Clyde to carry much of the world’s trade around the globe, took the ground of Scotland only as a launching place [...] There can be no coherent narrative of the nation not because the nation lacks narrative development but for precisely the opposite reason: its narrative spills out over many territories; it cannot be accommodated within the continuities demanded by the genre of a national history.’ (Craig 1999:236-7).

While Denmark’s colonial adventures were small-scale compared to those of the British Empire, it is nevertheless worth remembering that the vast tundra of

Greenland is still a constituent part of the Danish state. Though Greenland is not the focus of the present study, this anachronistic hinterland haunts the nation-space of Denmark, its geo-political reality and ethnic otherness giving the lie to the national discourse of smallness and homogeneity. As Homi Bhabha makes clear, the space of the nation is not synonymous with its geo-political territory. It is a space that is both physical and symbolic, multi-dimensional, and imbued with a temporal quality:

‘For the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its irredeemably plural modern space, bounded by different, even hostile nations, into a signifying space that is archaic and mythical, paradoxically representing the nation's modern territoriality [...] the difference of space returns as the Sameness of time’ (Bhabha 1990: 300)

Just as the nation has a double-time, the performative time of the everyday perpetually surmounting and reinterpreting the monolithic time of national(ist) pedagogy, so too is the space of the nation irrevocably split, despite its claims to wholeness. There are always cultural, political and economic centres and peripheries, which rarely correspond to geographical centres and peripheries; what is signified by the ‘signifying space’ is contingent and perspectival. The breaks and discontinuities of the Danish nation-space are played out in the tension between a homogenising historical narrative and the dissenting heterodoxies of the margins. While *Byen og verden* goes furthest in its turn to space as an organising and explanatory principle, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* and *I dag* are also deeply concerned with the spaces of history and the power of space.

### **2.2.1. Symbolic boundaries and topographies**

The symbolics of space was not lost on the caricaturists of nineteenth-century Denmark. A cartoon in the journal *Corsaren*, of 1841, juxtaposes the shrinking

territory of the *ex-helstat* with the growing size of the Royal Almanac and the increasingly elaborate Danish coat-of-arms (Borup Jensen 1993: 229). Interestingly, the loss of the Duchies of Slesvig and Holstein was anticipated here, over twenty years before the event. Accordingly, after the disaster at Dybbøl of 1864, the mantra of national reconstruction became Enrico Dalgas' formulation: *hvad udad tabes skal indad vindes*. This strikingly spatialised, centripetal agenda in fact referred to the cultivation of the Jutland heaths in order to compensate for the loss of Slesvig, but was adopted by the Radical and Social Democratic parties as a recension of foreign adventures (Østergård 1992: 40-1); a natural follow-on from the cultural and scientific insularity of the Golden Age (Mørch 1996: 90). The national history that was established around 1900 in Danish historiography, as Østergård argues, not only projected a meaningful *temporal* continuity and causality onto the chaos of the past, but also took for granted the geo-political boundaries of post-1864 Denmark, positing a *spatial* continuity that would have been impossible to predict in medieval Denmark, but which has been standard for 'classic' histories in the twentieth century (1992: 35-6).

The concern with boundaries – Anderson sees the modern national imagination as 'boundary-oriented and horizontal' (1991: 15) – is complemented by the impulse to an internal visual continuity. The expensive *fredningspolitik* whose purpose is to impose a Golden Age stasis on the silviculture of Jutland's heaths (Mørch 1996: 85) is a good example of policy imitating (Golden Age) art. The novel *I dag*, as will be seen in Chapter 4, traces this tension between a national pedagogy of landscape and localised everyday use of the land over time. And the national imagination is easily seduced by the connaturality of topography and national character. One of the Danish

national discourses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century became one of *flatness*, or, rather, a lack of mountains – a crucial trope in the ongoing ‘forging’ of a socio-cultural cohesion and linguistic homogeneity. Grundtvig (Borup Jensen 1993:148; Østergård 1996) wrote many a popular hymn proclaiming egalitarian sentiments such as:

‘Langt højere bjerge så vide på jord  
man har, end hvor bjerg kun er bakke;  
[...]  
vi er ikke skabte til højhed og blæst,  
ved jorden at blive, det tjener os bedst!’

The sentiment was echoed more recently in Michael Falch’s chart-topping pop hit *I et land uden høje bjerge* (1986, in Borup Jensen 1993: 153-4), which links the landscape to an alleged lack of bombast in the expression of modern Danish dreams. This imagined landscape is as contingent, constructed, and, ultimately, as ‘colonial’ as any other, and the interplay of centre and periphery here is fascinating: it was (mostly) the middle-class writers and artists of Golden Age Copenhagen who ‘discovered’ and tried to conserve Jutland, its heaths and its rolling hills and dales. Perhaps most tellingly, Hans Christian Andersen, in the wake of Walter Scott’s enormous popularity in Denmark, proclaimed Jutland ‘our very own Scotland’ (Scavenius 1994: 174ff). Thus not only the character of the nation, but also the immanence of history, is imagined as present in the national territory.

The topography of the national landscape, then, must be considered a palimpsest, a doubly- (or multiply-) layered construction. It must exist in text (it is also tempting to say: on celluloid and in digital code) as well as in soil and rock. As Hana Wirth-Nesher (1996) has shown, the meanings with which landmarks are imbued have individual, collective and, often, textual dimensions, which inform each other

mutually, and which change over time. Foucault's work on the history of space led him to identify a genre of spaces, *heterotopias* (1998;1967), to which are allocated deviant social functions, contain multiple spaces, or which open out on to multiple times. The concept of heterotopia, I argue in Chapters 3 and 4, has the potential to help us map the emergent multiple spaces of lived experience in text.

Moreover, a *national* topography must be a *historical* one – it must include the temporal dimension of landscape. This is troped in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, which uses the textual strategy of magical realism to excavate symbolic treasures from the subsoil of the fatherland. Thus the 'real' and the 'textual' landscapes are also collective – and individual – memoryscapes. The nation is imagined synchronically as well as diachronically; the peripheral limits and borderlands are important for the former dynamic, and the nation's mythic origins and destiny are important for the latter, though the two can hardly be separated.

A growing suspicion that the historical dimension of the landscape is not what it used to be informs some recent sociology. Pierre Nora (1984) has pointed to *lieux de mémoire*, official sites of collective memory, which have replaced lived communal memory; Marc Augé (1997) identifies a category of super-modern 'non-places' which commodify history or lack the affective qualities of spaces with authentic communal function. This suspicion is apparent in contemporary writing about historical place. The complexities of lived, historical and textual space are especially relevant to *Byen og verden*, the novel considered in Chapter 3, but the ways in which history is seen to flow through space are recurrent concerns in the present study.



While Anderson locates the sovereign power of the modern state in homogeneous space, ‘fully, flatly and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory’ (1991: 19), this undermines the imaginative dimensions of the nation-space on which much of his hypothesis depends, although the very concept of ‘meanwhile’, with its assumption of different people acting simultaneously, implies a spatial dimension to time. The turn to space in the humanities over the last few decades has taught us that space is not a neutral container in which events happen; space is symbolic, contingent and charged with socio-political potentialities (Middleton & Woods 2000: 275-77).

### 2.2.2. Heterogeneous spaces

Craig sees the blindness of conventional historiography to the deformations of space as a function of the modern impulse towards unilinearity and identity, the very essence of Anderson’s national subjects processing through homogeneous empty time:

‘[T]heir identity is not unity – it is precisely the intersection of diverse but contiguous narratives [...] The point which forms the *telos* of national history is the point where space has become irrelevant, and simultaneity is no longer different events happening in the same moment of time but, everyone having caught up and reached the same stage of history, space is simply the simultaneous repetition everywhere of identical narrative – which is also the narrative of how we all came to have the same identity.’ (1996: 223)

This centre cannot hold: the echo of Bhabha’s formulation of the difference of space returning as the Sameness of time in the national narrative can be heard in Craig’s plea for a recognition of the heterogeneity of the spaces we live in. After all, says Craig, people are simultaneously present and absent from a variety of spaces as a result of their participation in several narratives. This seems particularly urgent in an

age of supranational political and economic integration and ‘glocalisation’; how can the national narrative of Denmark incorporate, or co-exist with, narratives of Nordic, European and global imaginings? This question is addressed in Chapter 3, where the textual representation in *Byen og verden* of the built environment and of socially and culturally differentiated spaces are conceptualised as a geometry of concentric belongings; a heterotopia.

This leads us to consider the national subject (however that subject might be constituted) in space. Our experience of abstract space starts first with the body, and then with what has contact with, or is separated from it (Middleton & Woods 2000: 286); this is lived space, which intersects shiftingly with the representational (symbolic) space discussed in 2.2.1 above, in all its multifariousness. Space is both produced by, and influences, practices of living (Wegner 2002: 181). It will be remembered that Bhabha’s national subject is constituted in an ongoing process and performance concomitant with the unilinear pedagogy of the nation. The practices that implicate people in the temporal and spatial process that is the nation both shape, and are shaped by, the conventions and possibilities afforded by spatial relations: what can be done, where and when it can be done, and by whom. The banal bodily practices of the everyday, such as eating and dressing, as well as collective performances such as nationalist ceremonies, Paul Connerton (1989) tells us, are an important aspect of social memory. Bhabha’s insistence that the ‘scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture’ (1994: 145) is thereby rendered less metaphorical and more rooted in the everyday, bodily performance of subjective identity, be it ethnic, national, gendered or religious. The

implications of bodily practices and social memory for the ‘imagined community’ of the nation are taken up in Chapter 4, in connection with the novel *I dag*.

### 2.2.3. Textual space

While the various dimensions of the space of the nation are represented and negotiated in the novels in this study, there remains the issue of the less tangible literary spaces that open up within and between texts, whether these be the ‘hvide mellemrum’ (Kjærstad 1993) of untold stories between the lines, chronotopes (Bakhtin 1981) where *topoi* in the world of the text act as lightning-rods for the flow of narrative time, or ‘betydningsrum’ (Tygstrup 1999) which reflect and anticipate the extra-textual social construction of space. Each of these approaches enhances a temporal conception of the logic of the narrative with a spatial dimension, incorporating narrative elements which cannot satisfactorily be accounted for by a relationship of anteriority, sequentiality or causality. They also link the spatio-temporal patternings within the text to the prevailing or emergent forms of spatio-temporal cognition, that is, lived or imagined spacetime. For example, a concern with the fictive thematisation of boundaries or topographical palimpsests characteristic of rural, urban and national space might now be complemented by the fractal, multidirectional spaces of cyberspace and global flows of information and people. The latter is anticipated by Jameson. The most ‘energetic’ postmodern texts, he thinks, ‘tap the networks of the reproductive process and thereby [...] afford us some glimpse into a postmodern or technological sublime, whose power or authenticity is documented by the success of such works in evoking a whole new postmodern space in emergence around us’ (1991: 37). The texts chart the nascent socio-cultural formations engendered by technological advances. However, for Jameson, fictional

representations of postmodern computer networks and so on are inspired by the deeper socio-economic changes in our world, that is, ‘multinational capitalism’ (ibid.).

Textual space, then, is not simply the description of extra-textual space in text, but a refraction of ways of thinking spacetime; Tygstrup goes as far as to say that ‘[r]um-beskrivelsen er blandt de mindst betydningsfulde måder at fremstille rum på i litteratur’ (1999: 47). A text suggests various constellations and connections of events and themes that constitute a mode of organising the world – ‘konstruktionen af den kulturelle verdens fiber’ (Tygstrup 1999: 47) – and that answer to aspects of lived space. This, argues Tygstrup, is part of what makes fiction so seductive. Accordingly, in a culture where the linearity of historical narrative is no longer taken for granted, the text which has ‘other histories’ to tell will depend on structuring principles that both cast doubt upon chronology and assert alternative logics of coherence and belonging. The weave of the ‘kulturelle verdens fiber’ that Tygstrup claims is immanent in textual space may not necessarily be quite as technologically or materially inspired as Jameson suggests, but the latter’s concentration on computer networks and multinational capital is a good place to start looking for patterns in contemporary fiction that reflect our perception of the world and its spacetimes as less linear and more interconnected than it used to be.

This line of enquiry spills over from the textual to the material, leading us to ask what the role of writing and reading as social practices (Harvey 1990) or as practices of memory (Connerton 1989) might be in the ongoing exercise of the national imagination. In other words, Anderson’s unexplained hypothesis that fiction ‘seeps’

into reality comes back to haunt the discussion; Britta Timm Knudsen's (2002a) concept of the affective *mellemfelt* that opens up between text and empirical reader is offered, towards the Conclusion (in chapters 4 and 5), as one way to reconcile textual and lived spacetime, that is, imagining the nation through prosthetic memorial practice.

### **3. National history, postnational hi/stories**

#### **3.1. Order from chaos: history and the nation**

The establishment of the academic discipline of History in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century is seen by Anderson as part and parcel of this overall development of the diachronic dimension of the nation. This vast 'pedagogical industry' (Anderson 1991: 201) produces history emplotted in a particular way that demands forgetting as well as remembering (199-201); the nation's story is read '*genealogically* – as the expression of an historical tradition of serial continuity' (195, my emphasis). Discontinuities in the national story are re-told and re-interpreted as necessary stages on the way to the *telos* of national homogeneity. In the Danish context, Østergård is quite unequivocal in his attribution of an ideological origin to the discipline of History between 1850 and 1920:

'Historieforskningen er et fuldbåret barn af nationalstaternes tidsalder. Faget blev udviklet til at varetage tre delvist overlappende formål: 1) forvaltning af statssamfundets officielle hukommelse i form af de statslige arkiver, 2) produktion af national propaganda i konfrontationerne med nabostaterne og 3) national indoktrinering af hele den skolepligtige befolkning, kort sagt nationalisering af først bønderne, siden industriarbejderne.' (1992: 32)

Historiography, then, was and is utterly implicated in the representation of the nation. This is so, however, not only because it has the role of ‘fixing’ the diachronic dimension of national imagining as pedagogy, as Østergård describes above. The writing and reading of history also possess the potential to open up the space between the pedagogical and the performative by producing new readings – new ‘constellations’ – of the available material, a potential already outlined by Benjamin. Yet the historical academy has been slow to embrace the implications of work on the contingency of serial, linear time, and on the emplotted (fictive) characteristics of the historiographic endeavour. In 1992, Østergård could note that ‘den funktionelle opfattelse af national identitet er endnu ikke trængt ind i historieskrivningen og især ikke i dens populære, nationalhistoriske variant’ (49). And as recently as 2001, Claus Bryld complained that things had not changed much: ‘historie i mange henseender har bevaret sin klassiske rolle som legitimeringshistorie’ (2001: 14).

In literary studies and in the philosophy of history, however, the last quarter century has seen an interrogation of the modes of writing history, and, by extension, national history. The questions arising from these developments are closely linked to some of the concerns of modern and postmodern literature which have to do with power and the representation of reality, and include: what is the status of the historical text? who writes history? and where can the line between fact and fiction be drawn? These interlinked questions are considered in turn below.

### **3.2. Cultural and historical materialism**

In attempting to challenge the supremacy of historicist modes of thought, Walter Benjamin relies heavily on markedly spatial images. The most famous of these is, perhaps, the Angel of History, who is being propelled towards Paradise while the debris of 'progress' piles up in front of him: '[w]here we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet' (Benjamin 1999: 249). Another important deviation from the linear interpretation of history ('telling the sequence of events like the beads on a rosary') is his image of the 'constellation' which the historian's own era has formed with an earlier one (255). In other words, the past ceases to stretch away 'down time', and is conceptualised as a storehouse of material from which the historian can select elements and hold them in a meaningful formation commensurate with the demands of his hermeneutic project. As ways of conceptualising and organising experience, these metaphors can help us to think the historical narratives of belonging of postnational novels, as I shall argue in connection with the novels in this study.

A third image, thrown out as if in passing in Benjamin's *Theses*, is that of the practitioner of this radical history, the *historical materialist*, who 'regards it as his task to brush history against the grain' (248). This is the epigraph chosen by Benedict Anderson for *Imagined Communities*. Anderson's text is best seen as rooted in the emerging disciplines (in the 1980s) of new historicism and cultural materialism. If the grand narrative of national history had been rendered suspect by the early 1980s, the next step was to interrogate the system of representations of the imagined nation. For new historicists, the literary texts of any given period are in unending dialogue with other genres and discourses; they are engaged in 'an unprivileged exchange with the historical forces at the time of their production' (Brannigan 1998: 12). The extra

dimension of political and ideological struggle in text which cultural materialists tend to extrapolate from similar methods (97) demonstrates how the study of the cultural avatars of nationalism can be made to serve the purpose of dedoxifying contemporary nationalism. In other words, Anderson's analysis of the novel as just one influential form of text and cultural (and commercial) artefact amongst many others is indeed a practice that 'brushes history against the grain,' precisely by revealing the fictive and historiographical functioning of census, map, museum, novel and so on.

### **3.3. 'Jarring Witnesses'**

#### **3.3.1. The triumphal procession...and the 'others'**

The work of the philosopher of history Hayden White, whom Anderson (1991: 194) cites as an influence, has shown how historical and fictional narratives employ many mutual strategies to make sense of the chaos of the world. In his own words, the historical work is 'a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse' (White 1973: ix), whose rhetorical patterns were established by a select group of master historians in the mid-nineteenth century, including Michelet, Ranke and Tocqueville (4). White, like Østergård and Bryld, explains the crystallisation of 'proper' history, and its enduring hold on the anti-theoretical mindset of historians, as rooted in state patronage: 'historians have always tended to be the lackeys of the upper classes...or to serve the state or their patrons [...] So I think that the conception of proper history is just a way of getting conformity' (Jenkins 1998: 72). More broadly speaking, the historical mindset has the effect of perpetuating the West's privileging of its own political and economic systems as an advanced stage of a progression which should obtain universally:



‘the historical consciousness on which Western man has prided himself since the beginning of the nineteenth century may be little more than a theoretical basis for the ideological position from which Western civilisation views its relationships not only to cultures and civilisations preceding it but also to those contemporary with it in time and contiguous with it in space’ (White 1973: 2)

The historical imagination therefore orders the world spatially as well as chronologically; geographical distance, to paraphrase Bhabha, returns as historical anteriority. This also reminds us that the national imagination developing in the nineteenth century did not preclude an awareness of a European identity superior to that of the rest of the world, as expressed in the colonialist notion of ‘the white man’s burden’. Indeed, the assumption that all world views not corresponding to the Western one were ‘primitive’ held sway in anthropology until the last quarter of the twentieth century. Introducing contributions to a conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists in 1992, entitled *Other Histories*, Kirsten Hastrup comments:

‘The [European] unified sense of history seems to be a discursive rather than a social fact and the product of a highly literate Enlightenment heritage. In Europe as elsewhere there is a multiplicity of histories. If our cultural consciousness has become objectified in a particular historical genre...that is linearized and continuous, analysis reveals the non-synchronicity and discontinuity of social experience.’ (Hastrup 1992a: 2)

What is developing is an acceptance that the ‘same’ events may be emplotted in quite different ways, depending on point of view. Moreover, this goes further than a mere criticism of historicism for its empathy with the victor, a form of historiography which Benjamin memorably visualises as ‘the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate’ (1999: 248). The recognition of the validity of ‘other histories’ potentially allows, to stretch the metaphor, everyone to participate in the triumphal procession; and what an unruly and multitudinous

procession that promises to be. Robert Holton (1994) has summed up this democratisation of history as listening to the voices of the ‘jarring witnesses’ that nineteenth-century historians calmly explained could not be allowed to obscure the coherent narrative that was there for the finding in any field. Holton follows White in attributing the legitimation of narrative authority to social authority (Holton 1994: 36ff); in other words, socio-economic power determines which narratives make ‘sense’, which are allowed to speak for the community as a whole, and which are contained as deviant.

Holton thinks that history is fundamentally about community, be it local, national, gendered, etc. The narratives that plot the community’s trajectory are rendered legitimate by, on the one hand, society’s delegation of authority to certain individuals to create these narratives (for example, through academic certification), and, on the other, by the set of assumptions and worldviews accepted as ‘common sense’ within the community (1994: 40). These two factors are in play in Holton’s comment that ‘the presuppositions that must be accepted if the coherence of narrative is to overcome the non-coherence of events *ought* to appear self-evidently true’ (ibid., emphasis in original); that is, the ‘truth’ is bestowed by social authority and by tacit common agreement. Holton uses Bourdieu’s concept of ‘doxa’ (Bourdieu 1993) to explain how the arbitrary assumptions of a community – for example, the linear march of time and history – are assumed to be natural until the existence of alternative possibilities is revealed by some kind of shock or rupture. This initiates a state of orthodoxy, in which there is competition for legitimacy, for example from the claims of colonised peoples or women that their histories are also legitimate (Holton 1994:

42); orthodoxy is thus a bastion against the heterodoxy of other histories, of jarring witnesses (44). Crucially, the heterodox does not posit a true version of the history of the oppressed, but denies the legitimacy of any centred, settled version of events. Thus the admission of marginalised stories and storytellers (women, ethnic minorities, children) into the national narrative does not constitute a reversal of fortune, but an open forum.

### 3.3.2. The historian as ‘jarring witness’

Claus Bryld (2001: 18-19) sees the beginnings of this state of affairs in Denmark, at least to some extent. He maintains that traditional and posttraditional interpretations and uses of history co-exist in the context of the information society, so that a ‘homogen statshistorie’ is difficult to pin down. One important use of history today, says Bryld, is in the assertion of individual identity. The little histories commissioned for businesses, localities, sexualities, etc. contribute to a politics of representation, a kind of market place where interest groups compete for influence. It may even be that postmodern society *insists* on the right to tell one’s own hi/stories; if so, asks Bryld, should there be a common frame of reference, or should they be juxtaposed as complementary or conflicting versions of events? We can go further: in such a society, what kind of history do we identify as pedagogy, in Bhabha’s sense? This is the problem that Mads, the narrator-historian of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, struggles with: who is allowed to speak, and how can their voices have any authority if everyone is speaking at once? And, again, we should remind ourselves of Bhabha’s rejoinder that the performative dynamic of heterogeneous

voices within the national narrative must be a supplement, as opposed to a vague swirl of multicultural noise; it must add to without adding up (Bhabha 1994: 162).

Claus Bryld has a personal investment in the role and reception of 'jarring witnesses'. His autobiographical novel *Hvilken befrielse. Fortælling fra en opvækst i nazismens og retsopgørets skygge* (1995) is an account of his childhood as the son of a Nazi sympathiser; it mixes documentary and literary techniques, deliberately splicing 'hverdag og verden' in order, he explains retrospectively, to convince people 'at det nytter noget, at den enkelte slutter sig sammen med andre og handler' (Bryld 2001: 62). It was also an intervention in 'den store historie, der størkner og bliver ritualiseret', and which is the basis for the national narrative, which subsumes the nuances of individual experience into its great triumphs, dates and sense of identity (2001: 61). Bryld counters his critics (at *Politiken*, amongst others) by asserting the right not only to write about his Nazi relatives (without being an apologist for their actions), as well as his right to include the personal and the intimate in his hi/story, a practice which, he notes, is only 'god tone' in women's history (65). Here, we see the historian self-reflexively assuming the role, indeed, the discourse, of a jarring witness, though his propensity to jar lies less in the assumption of the persona of a feminised chronicler of personal history and more in his giving voice to an abhorred group of marginal subjects: those who ended up on the wrong side at the Liberation.

### 3.3.3. Bakhtin and heteroglossia

In the novel, Holton goes on (1994: 46-7), the condition of heterodoxy has been traced by Bakhtin as *heteroglossia*, the jostling of languages from different periods and social strata which are refracted and ‘artistically organized’ by the author (Bakhtin 1981: 262). For Bakhtin, of course, ‘verbal discourse is a social phenomenon’ (259), and so the dialogue of different groups in society (he gives a long list of such language groups, ranging from professional through age groups to passing fashions) is translated into the stylistics of the novel (263). Again, the notion of a settled outcome is anathema within the dialogized system of voices. Indeed, for Bakhtin, only an unbalanced and outward-looking community can produce successfully heteroglossic novels; the right conditions for alchemy are when the community ‘becomes riddled with decay or shifted somehow from its state of internal balance and self-sufficiency’ (1981: 368). Bhabha tropes this temporally as the ‘sudden shock of the successive, non-synchronic time of cultural difference’ (1994: 162). Moreover, the community – Bakhtin specifies the national community as an example – must interact with the other national cultures that surround it:

‘The internal speech diversity of a literary dialect and of its surrounding extraliterary environment, that is, the entire dialectological makeup of a given national language, must have the sense that it is surrounded by an ocean of heteroglossia [...] that fully reveals an intentionality, a mythological, religious, sociopolitical literary system of its own, along with all the other cultural-ideological systems that belong to it.’ (Bakhtin 1981: 368)

All this has important consequences for the present study. The concepts of heterodoxy and heteroglossia presume some kind of epistemic social break that unbalances the community and reveals disjunctures through which alternative voices and value

systems emerge. White is generally interested in the historiography that is produced on the cusp of two dominant tropes and conceptions of reality, as his work on the ‘modern event’ – the ‘holocaustal event’ particular to the twentieth century (1999: 70) – and its literary and historical representations attests (see 3.4 below). Adding to this idea Bakhtin’s insistence on the importance for the fully dialogized novel of intra- and intercultural confrontation, we can appreciate the significance for the contemporary novel of late twentieth-century discourses in Denmark of ‘them’ and ‘us’, based on perceptions of European Union usurpation of sovereignty, penetration of the nation by immigrants, and global flows of information and people. In Bakhtin’s formulation, Danish society may then sense a shift from its ‘self-sufficiency’, see itself as ‘riddled with heteroglossia’, and negotiate its new identity in the novel. Put differently, the socio-cultural condition of postmodernity thus intersects with the cultural expressions of postmodernism and the seismic effects are registered in the novel.

But we find ourselves in a hall of mirrors, for the heterodox condition of the contemporary nation described by Bhabha, for example, *is itself the new orthodoxy*; Bakhtin’s description of the behaviour of ‘jarring witnesses’ in the novel is itself a founding text of the late twentieth-century critical discourses of multiculturalism and scepticism towards grand narratives that Bhabha’s (and this) intervention try to tease out of narrative. In such a context, the urgent question, and one which all three novels in this study try to negotiate, is not only *who* is allowed to speak. It is: what is worth the telling? Or, in historical parlance, what, exactly, are ‘facts’ and ‘events’?

### **3.4. Fact and fiction in postmodern historiography and literature**

When the doxa of Western historiographical method is shattered by the realisation that a heterodoxy of histories can be seen to order the world in many meaningful ways, how can any ‘meaning’ be extracted from ‘the sublime chaos of disjoined and discrepant narrations’ (Holton 1994: 15)? Moving beyond a trust in the pseudo-scientific basis of history towards a re-location of meaning in the form rather than the content of the historical text allows White to collapse fiction and historiography in on each other – the usefulness of this move for Anderson’s hypothesis that national imagining is based in the form of a range of narratives including fiction and history is clear. Yet it also leaves White open to accusations of relativism (Kansteiner 1993: 275). If all possible formal rhetorical structures are, all else being equal, fitted to order and communicate the chaos of unmediated event, then the notion of truth is the baby thrown out with the bathwater. White has wavered between his initial stance of absolute relativism and partial concessions to immanent truth-value in the primary material of history (1999: 276). As if to counter this criticism of the ethical import of his hypothesis, and mindful of the interest from within literary studies in his work, White has in recent years turned to literary theory and to the question of the representation of twentieth-century catastrophes such as the Holocaust and the World Wars, arguing that literary modernism and postmodernism are the most ‘truthful’ representations of such events. On the one hand, this is the case because the ‘holocaustal events’ of the twentieth century (the Shoah, the World Wars, ecological destruction, and so on) defy quantitative analysis, and preclude the ‘humanist’ assumption of historically-aware agents conscious of the cause and effect of their actions in ‘commonsensical’ ways. On the other hand, such events have also undermined the philosophical basis of the very notion of ‘event’. Singular events are now, claims White, ‘worthy of study only as a hypothetical presupposition necessary

to the constitution of a documentary record' full of 'inconsistencies, contradictions, gaps, and distortions of the event presumed to be their common referent'; it is the nature and knowability of the record that is the new object of study, not the 'meaning' of the event itself (White 1999: 71). It is important to stress that this approach does not challenge the reality of events such as the Shoah; instead, it challenges the traditional modes of narrativising them which would 'enable the event – render it fit therefore for investment by fantasies of intactness, wholeness, and health which the very occurrence of the event denies' (81). Because they make no claims to realistic representation, White thinks that the stylistic and formal 'psychopathologies' of modernist literature (and film) – that is, their deviation from teleological narrative, stable point of view, etc. – can avoid bleeding modernist events dry of horror by refusing to make sense of them:

'[modernist literature] does this by consistently voiding the event of its traditional narrativistic function of indexing the irruption of fate, destiny, grace, fortune, providence, and even of history itself into a life' (1999: 74)

To give lives cut short by genocide or war 'a semblance of pattern' or, even worse, 'an actual, transocial, and transhistorical significance' (ibid.), we might say, is to subsume the testimony of the jarring witness into the grand designs of Benjamin's victors. While the three Danish novels in this study are not explicitly concerned with the horrors of war and genocide, they do thematise the status of event – including that of 'holocaustal events' such as World War Two – by concerning themselves with the documentary record in all its inconsistencies, contradictions, gaps, and distortions, and, most importantly, in its multiplicity; in other words, the conjunction of grand event and everyday lived experience.



It is the everyday that usually falls through the gaps in historical narrative; what is repeated and habitual is not the stuff of narrative progress (Craig 1996: 68, 217), but it is the stuff of life. Benjamin praises the chronicler who tells of both major and minor events, for ‘nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history’ (1999: 246). This is a suspicion shared by all three novels in this study, but the narrator of *I dag* is especially alive to what nineteenth-century historians would call the sublime, unmediated historical material, the great unknown of other people’s *stille eksistenser*:

‘Det interessante i verden er de mange anelser og den store uvidenhed. Mellem de to punkter sker det. Måske uden vi mærker det.’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 257)

The underlying question of how events are constructed (given meaning), ordered (emplotted), and by whom (historian or jarring witness) is worked through in these novels by their interweaving of historical fact and everyday fiction. *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* pastiches magical realism as a textual strategy to question the ‘reality’ of events and possibility of their historical representation; *Byen og verden* problematises the question of who speaks, and how reliable they are, and posits evidence of ‘unknowable’ events; and *I dag* thematises the mnemonic construction of events and acknowledges the mediation of events through the modern media. The issue of fact and fiction in the novel, and its role in the construction of a national textual community, will be taken up again in 4.2 below, when we discuss the notion of the postnational model reader.

### 3.5. The end(s) of history

A final trend in late twentieth-century history which is of relevance to our consideration of national fictions is the diffuse impression that history is somehow coming to an end. White's interventions have marked the end of the supremacy of a particular *type* of history, that which flourished in symbiotic relationship with the nineteenth-century novel to create a reality effect closely allied to the imagining of the national community as a historical fact and process. The dedoxifying of this historical tradition has coincided, in the last decade of the twentieth century, with another declaration of the End of History, that of Francis Fukuyama (1992), who sees in the European collapse of Communism the final victory of liberal democracy and capitalism, and thereby the 'end' of historical progress, give or take a few struggles for recognition born out of posthistorical boredom (287ff). That this is a 'trivial' announcement has been noted by, amongst others, Cairns Craig, who attributes the same observation to George Orwell, who saw history as having stopped with the Spanish Civil War in 1936 (Craig 1996: 207). Even Fukuyama himself recognises that Hegel saw the End of History in the French Revolution, which had established an ideal Christian society based on freedom and equality (Fukuyama 1992: 199; Bryld 2001: 117-46). The impact of Fukuyama's observations was certainly exacerbated by the serendipitous time of publication of their first essay-length version: 1989. In essence, Fukuyama's *End of History*, with its rarefied teleology, is a self-declared rebuke to the 'most profound thinkers of the twentieth century' who have 'pessimistically' done away with the hope that history was 'a coherent or intelligible process' (1992: xiii). Fukuyama's writings are of special interest for the impassioned

debate they brought in their wake, not least their contribution to popular awareness that '1989 and all that' constituted the dawn of some kind of new political era (Bryld 2001: 119) in which history would behave differently from before, in much the same way as time and space, as Middleton & Woods (2000) argue, are *imagined* as being different, which is what makes the difference for its literary representations. Consequently, it is foolhardy to present contemporary historiography as exclusively antinarrative and antigenealogical; Fukuyama's work is a prime example of how discourses co-exist and communicate within disciplines.

Fukuyama is careful to explain (though many of his detractors have misunderstood this) that his theory did not posit that events would cease to occur; what had come to an end was 'a single, coherent, evolutionary process' of History, which had reached its *telos* (1992: xii). The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1994a; 1994b), however, has gone further. In the early 1990s, looking towards the year 2000 which, he insisted, would not take place, he announced an 'event strike'. Either because history had accelerated to the point where it left earth orbit, or because it has been slowed by the inert masses of society, or, again, because new technologies of representation and information had swallowed history up in high-fidelity effects, 'events' in the 1990s were refusing to attain meaning (Baudrillard 1994b: 2-5). Baudrillard's approach to the transformations wrought in history and culture at the end of the millennium is unapologetically metaphorical. As such, the conclusions he draws from the prevailing scepticism towards the linearity of time and the meaningfulness of history – an endlessly receding horizon of the 'end', for example – speak to the translation of such dispositions into literary form. Baudrillard becomes

important again in chapter 5, where his ideas on late twentieth-century transformations of time, space, history and event help us to come to terms with what I call the recycling of the century in our novels.

### 3.6. *Den sidste Danmarkshistorie*

Before moving on to outline an approach to the national imagination as it encounters the contemporary novel, a last word goes to a last history of Denmark. Søren Mørch's *Den sidste Danmarkshistorie* (1996) brings together many of the concerns and trends in the perception and representation of time, space and history as they touch on (post)national historiography, and helps to introduce some formal properties that postnational historiography and fiction may be seen to share.

Mørch's title is, perhaps, a sideswipe at Fukuyama's *End of History*, for Mørch's stance (though he does not engage with Fukuyama's argument) is that '[h]istorien udfolder sig så hurtigt og mangfoldigt som ingensinde før', and the possibilities for studying history are immensely improved; however, history, he goes on, cannot be *told* in the same way as before (Mørch 1996: 12). 'Danmarkshistorien hører med til det ideologiske gods, der er ved at blive pakket sammen' (13). This, Mørch's version of Danish history, is an attempt to find out how Denmark became a 'nationalstat', and why things are different now.

Mørch's broad adherence to the antigenealogical view of national history has already been touched on. His fine synopsis of the entropy of the national historical narrative is worth citing, though, for its ironic reification of time:

'Historier begynder – og de holder op igen.  
'Sådan er det også med den danske nationalstats historie. Den begynder – og den holder op igen. Historien begyndte langsomt og den sluttede også langsomt. Da den sluttede, sivede kraften lige så stille ud af den ligesom af et gammeldags bornholmerur, nar loddet går i bund: Tik, tak, tik, tak...tik...tak.....tik  
'Nationalstatens historie er holdt op. Den holdt op omkring 1960-70'erne, men vi fik ikke rigtig lagt mærke til det.' (1996: 542)

Mørch tackles the pillars of the national state, as constructed in the nineteenth-century, throughout the book, and gathers together the new orthodoxy of the nation-state as modern construct, both industrial and imagined, here, in his 56<sup>th</sup> chapter. The homogenising discourse of the nationalists has been revealed precisely as 'homogenising' and as a 'discourse' in earlier chapters on Golden Age art, the Church, the Danish language, Danish genes, the Welfare State, the social strata, so-called *nydanskere*, and so on. The book is both a metahistory in White's sense – a history of how history is written – and a formally innovative text that challenges the generic and disciplinary boundaries of autobiography and history, of small and great histories, and, by extension, the status of fact and fiction.

*Den sidste Danmarkshistorie* is organised as *57 fortællinger af fædrelandets historie* – this is also its subtitle – a conceit which not only highlights the idea of narrative (*fortælling*) in its factual and fabulous forms, but also precludes any claim to be 'udtømmende og enkelt' like the *History of Danish Dreams* (Høeg 1999: 7), for the total of fifty-seven texts seems both excessive and arbitrary, and therefore too little.

The *fortællinger* are, in turn, arranged thematically rather than chronologically in sets (*afsnit*), which makes it difficult to discern the historical teleology of ‘progress’ so integral to the discourses of many of the institutions covered here, such as the Welfare State, Danish polity, the national state, and History itself. Indeed, the very concept of progress, and our contemporary suspicion of it, are in 8. *fortælling: Fremskridtet* treated as just about as old as each other, and equally subjective (Mørch 1996: 73). The self-reflexive undermining of the text’s own ‘lastness’ is reiterated throughout; the dialectic of orthodoxy and lateral thinking never ends.

Causality comes in for the same treatment in 54. *fortælling: Sommerfugle-effekten*. In this chapter, Mørch adopts the trope of the butterfly that flaps its wings and causes chaos on the other side of the world to structure the hi/story of how his wife’s (the politician Ritt Bjerregård) choice of apartment led to the ‘no’ vote in the Danish referendum on the Maastricht Treaty in June 1992. Chaos Theory, says Mørch, theorises what haunts historians: the unpredictability of cause and effect. Moreover, ‘i takt med elimineringen af troen på, at verden kan opdeles i styrende og styrede og med, at målene derfor skrider og bliver til luftspejlinger, falder sommerfugle-effekten tydeligere og tydeligere i øjnene’ (521). New ways of structuring – narrating – the (lack of) order that history teases out of chaos are therefore linked to the fall of old ideologies and certainties. What this chapter also represents is, arguably, the most blatant example of personal micro-history in the book, a paragon of Claus Bryld’s desired ethical linkage of the everyday and the world (2001: 62), a world in which one’s spouse’s domestic arrangements can lead to cabinet re-shuffles and lost referenda.

As such, this chapter is a reiteration of the community of the nation-state, where the actions of one national subject are linked to the actions of the many, in a matter of a decisively ‘national’ hue (the referendum). Anderson’s observations about the effects of a census on the national imagination are also applicable to referenda. Though the results (and pollsters’ predictions of the results) are published as percentages and integers, universal suffrage nevertheless rests on the conventions of anonymity and of ‘a mirage-like integrity of the body’ accorded to each and every national citizen (Anderson 1998: 36-7). In the Danish context, this sense of bound seriality, a finite number of simultaneous and linked actions, is expressed in the old adage about voting according to *hoveder* and not *høveder*.

Another feature of *Den sidste Danmarkshistorie* is the turn to a kind of spatialised history. This is evident throughout in the tendency to site *fortællinger* in places of national or social significance – the school, the workshop, the family home – which take up a place in Anderson’s unbound seriality (a vast number of schools and homes throughout the world) within the bound seriality of national symbol (exclusively *Danish* schools and homes). The spatial perspective is particularly evident in the 3. *fortælling: Et monument*. This chapter traces Mørch’s own education from evening classes through to appointment at the newly-established Odense Universitet in 1966. Mørch presents the university’s premises as a coalescence of time-specific socio-cultural attitudes to education and class (Høeg’s narrator would refer to *drømme*): ‘et monument over mange menneskers omtanke og umage i det danske samfund i netop denne periode’ (Mørch 1996: 25). A monument, that is, in the sense of ‘et minde eller et tegn til kommende generationer og århundreder om bestemte hensigter på opførelsestidspunkt’ (27). With the aid of plans and photographs, he explains the

thinking behind the design of the campus: it has no central point, only a central line of streets and corridors. Therefore: '[d]en er skabt ikke til hvile, men til bevægelse' (26). In terms of scale, ambition and material permanency, the campus is commensurate with Kronborg Slot or the largest cathedrals; the functional needs of its many users (such as toilets!) have hardly been taken into account in the design (28). The movement that is immanent in the architecture is therefore not only lived daily experience but also teleological: the expansion of higher education, made possible by healthy economic growth, towards the ultimate goal of social equality in cultural and economic terms (29). And the refusal of the building to survey its territory like a castle, point towards an uncertain heaven like a cathedral, or even clash with the landscape, are emblematic of a deeply-held assumption that the (Danish) universe is fundamentally harmonic. Thus the national spacetime of the 1960s is seen to flow through this monumental structure of concrete and iron but, in the end, says Mørch, research cannot be conducted under harmonic, or pluralistic, conditions, for it presupposes a striving after an unobtainable final truth, a tenet which echoes Craig's vision of history as a dialectic in space (Craig 1996: 114). If Odense Universitet was designed to facilitate the unilinear flow of homogeneous bodies into an egalitarian future, the day-to-day work and politics of the institution work within and in defiance of its physical and symbolic space. Mørch's assessment of this site as an example of the use of space in a given period is an excellent example of the history *of* space (as opposed to a history *in* space), as called for by Foucault (1998: 176).

The implicit assumption of *Den sidste Danmarkshistorie* – in its title, but also in its experimental form – is the prior existence of traditional histories against which it can be read, in much the same way as abstract art assumes as its predecessor the realist



tradition. This means that the text assumes a reader who has knowledge of that 'straight' or pedagogical history of Denmark which is now being deconstructed, as well as of the turn to pluralistic histories that Bryld identifies as 'repræsenterende' histories (2001: 18). The one cannot have impact without the other. The reader must be able to distinguish the problematic 'national' events from the (representative) fripperies of Mørch's own lived experience; s/he must be an ironic and multiverse nationalist, or at least willing to enter into such a tutelage, since Mørch's tone is often didactic. *Den sidste Danmarkshistorie*, I would argue, is a work that White would characterise as sitting on the cusp between historiographical tropes, not so much for its antigenealogical deconstruction of Danish national identity, which in itself was hardly revolutionary in 1996, but for its blurring in praxis of the boundaries of storytelling, autobiography and historiography, for its recognition of the blindspots of its own 'relativist', 'constructivist' discourse, and for its formal intervention in the established narrative structures of national spacetime. It demands, or assumes, a reader who is at once privy to the knowledge that makes him or her a national animal, but also anxious about the historical contingency of that same nationness: in short, the kind of reader which, I want to argue, the three novels in this study also demand.

#### **4. Nationness and fiction**

In this final section, the role of literature in the national imagination is explored. The essential elements of the form and content of Anderson's posited 'national' novel are interrogated, with an eye to establishing, afterwards, the deviations of the novels in the present study from these patterns. The notion of a postnational model reader is then outlined. Finally, the interplay of canon, genre and nation – national literary histories – is also given consideration.

#### 4.1. The question of content and form

Anderson's formulation of the effect of the widespread dissemination of the novel in the nineteenth century deserves reiteration and closer examination. It 'provided the technical means for "re-presenting" the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation' (1991: 25): the italics are Anderson's own, and their effect is to widen the scope of his theory, from novels with explicitly national(ist) *content*, such as the historical novel, to novels whose *form* facilitates the imagining of communities based on the essential concept of 'meanwhile'. This wide applicability should also be apparent from Anderson's earlier criticism (1991: 6) of Gellner's typology of 'genuine' and 'false' communities: nations, Anderson implies, are just one type of imagined community, and even 'primordial villages of face-to-face contact' *may* be imagined, too. The very title of Anderson's book is also telling in this respect: there is no 'nation' until the subtitle (*Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*).

Jonathan Culler (1999) identifies some of the problems that misinterpretation of this aspect of Anderson's argument have caused, shifting some of the blame onto the ambiguity he perceives in Anderson's text:

'There is a tension between the explicit claim about the novel as analogue of the nation and Anderson's remarks about the novels he presents in chapter 2 of *Imagined Communities* [...] But Anderson's explicit claims about the role of the novel and homogeneous empty time treat the world of the novel as in principle an *analogue* of the nation – one which would not therefore need to be a representation of that particular nation in order to contribute to the imagining of the nation.' (Culler 1999: 23)

As Culler observes, Anderson (unwittingly?) narrows the applicability of his hypothesis by using as examples novels which are 'about' the potential for nationness

or the struggle for nationhood. These selections may go some way to explaining why it is very hard to find studies of non-national(ist) novels which draw on Anderson's thesis. It is also pertinent to observe the overwhelming interest in the exceptionally dramatic examples of literary and political nation-building emanating from the post-colonial world,<sup>2</sup> a focus which, currently, is also in evidence in the field of Translation Studies. In any case, it has often been overlooked by literary and cultural theorists working from *Imagined Communities* that, in positing the decisive influence of the novel and the newspaper in national imaginings, Anderson 'rests his claim on formal structures' (Culler 1999: 23), as opposed to content, or 'aboutness'. The issue of 'content' or 'aboutness' is more complex than meets the eye. It is essential to establish some kind of rule of thumb concerning whether, and in what ways, a novel may be said to be 'about' the nation.

In an article on themes of nation in Danish cinema, Mette Hjort comments: '[a] theme is... a semantic construct that emerges during the process of engaging with a given work' (2000: 105). She differentiates between 'perennial' themes, which highlight universal and eternal human interests (love, the meaning of life) and 'topical' themes, which are relevant and meaningful only within a specific cultural context. She concludes that Danish films – in spite of the Danish Film Institute's attempts to promote the making of films with an Danish 'theme' ('Danish' being left undefined by the DFI) – tend to be 'about' Denmark only in a topical sense, since elevating 'nationness' to the status of perennial theme would not produce interesting or commercially viable films. Furthermore, many Danish films may be said to be 'about'

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<sup>2</sup> In this connection, Culler quotes Fredric Jameson's claim that 'all third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call national allegories' (Jameson, Fredric, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multi-National Capitalism', in *Social Text* 15 (Fall 1986): 65-88, p69), quoted in Culler 1999: 24 n.4

Denmark in that their setting makes use of ‘banal’ (Billig 1995) or everyday elements of national culture such as flags, weather reports, or references to sports teams; but unless such elements are ‘flagged’ or focalised in some way, they cannot be said to constitute even a topical theme. Banal nationalism as ‘background noise’ is labelled ‘banal aboutness’ by Hjort.

We can apply the same reasoning to the novel. It is possible to envisage novels which focus on nationness as a perennial theme, and as a topical theme. The kind of novels Anderson employs as examples in chapter 2 of *Imagined Communities*, it could be argued, fall into the second category, since they take as their subject the plight of specific colonial territories denied national status. However, as Hjort points out, these cut-and-dried categories are not particularly helpful unless we use them to ‘pick out different kinds of emphases in works’ rather than ‘definitively to identify themes as belonging always to only one of two categories’ (Hjort 2000:106). Having established that Anderson’s reasoning is based on the form rather than the content of the novel, we could say that it is the relative emphasis on nationness as a perennial and/or topical phenomenon, together with the banal aboutness inherent in any novelistic setting, that explains how Anderson’s theory can be based on the form of the novel, not just its content. Put differently, community-ness (and by extension nationness) as a perennial theme is inherent in any novel involving more than one character. Of the three novels in the present study, only *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* may be said to focus explicitly on the historical construction of nationness as a perennial and topical theme (the Danish twentieth century as relevant to the twentieth century as a whole). However, *Byen og verden* and *I dag* both weave aspects of topical nationness into their narrative, in particular through the juxtaposition of versions of regional or

rural culture with metropolitan Denmark. All three novels, though, are concerned with the perennial issue of community-ness: what binds communities of various sizes together in space and in time?

Returning to Culler's article, then, we see that it constitutes an attempt to pin down the precise role of fiction in the construction of the imagined community of the nation. He identifies three essential aspects of the novel relevant to its function in this respect, one of which is the national content of the fiction, as discussed above. The other two are 'the formal structure of narrative point of view' and 'the construction of the reader' (Culler 1999: 22). The former is easily tackled: the construction of the sense of 'meanwhile' in empty homogeneous time requires not so much an omniscient reader, but certainly the unified point of view which fell from supremacy in the course of the nineteenth century (ibid.). The second requires some expansion, however.

#### **4.2. The (post)national model reader**

Given the portrayal of the national citizen as a site of heterogeneous discourses that we have begun to establish, the question of the address to the reader – or what kind of implied reader is addressed by the text – becomes rather paradoxical. Is it possible to theorise an 'implied reader' that can account for the ironic and multiverse Danish national subject?

If, for White, the nineteenth-century historical novel was born out of the 'interference between an imaginary tale of romance and a set of real historical events' (White 1999: 67), each category within the text endowing the other with its romance or reality, this only goes to show that fact and fiction are mutually defining, within a given

orthodoxy. It is this orthodoxy that is important, the contract between text and reader; the latter, says White, is assumed to have the capacity to distinguish between real and imaginary events, and thus between fact and fiction. White does not specify how this capacity is attained, but we must assume that historical pedagogy is its basis, as Jameson suggests when he writes that this genre requires ‘mobilization of previous historical knowledge generally acquired through the schoolbook history manuals devised for whatever legitimizing purpose by this or that national tradition’ (1991: 23). In the postmodernist docudrama or historical metafiction, argues White, the distinction between fact and fiction is collapsed, with the real and the imaginary discussed as if they belonged to the same ontological order, so that ‘the referential function of the images of events is etiolated’ (White 1999:68). By extension, the reader must be *au fait* with this convention, though White’s discussion of the reception of Oliver Stone’s docudrama *JFK* suggests that reviewers, at least, are often bewildered and incensed by the betrayal of historical ‘facts’. We are left wondering how White’s community of implied readers is to be defined.

Culler attacks Anderson’s assumption that the community of readers of a given newspaper is necessarily a ‘national’ one. Although it is likely that the day’s news is read simultaneously – over the breakfast table, as it were – one only has to think of competing broad-sheets (*Politiken* versus *Jyllandsposten* in Denmark, or *The Scotsman* versus *The Herald* in Scotland) to see how the individual’s choice of newspaper perhaps reveals more about his/her elective class-, profession- or region-based affinities than about the sense of belonging to a nation-wide community of

readers.<sup>3</sup> The community of readers of any given novel can also be seen as problematic. As Culler argues, '[t]his is not only a question of who reads them but of whom they address. Novels construct a role for readers by positing a reader who knows some things but not everything, needs to have some things explained but not others' (1999: 27). This evokes not only the repository of cultural knowledge which the individual carries by virtue of his/her participation in a culture, but also that both narrator and implied reader are conscious of their mutual common knowledge. Anderson's analysis of the novels he uses in chapter 2 of *Imagined Communities* includes the extension of the community evoked within a novel to the community of (implied) readers: sometimes by direct address, sometimes by allusion to cultural artefacts (houses, practices) which obtain in the textual world as well as the real world.

Culler, though, points to instances where the narrator explains cultural phenomena to the reader as 'outsider', 'by speaking anthropologically' (28). The reader is not *always* – and not *consistently* – addressed as a member of the national community. Although Culler bases his argument on Anderson's own analysis of national(ist) novels, there is no reason why we cannot appeal to his earlier dismissal of the necessity of national 'aboutness' for Anderson's hypothesis. The inclusion or exclusion of the implied reader of a text can, we may assume by extension, apply just as readily to novels whose contribution to national imagining relies on form, or analogue, rather than content. Instead of considering whether the implied reader is of

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<sup>3</sup> We could also point to the increasing tendency among broad-sheets and tabloids alike to present themselves as *the* national newspaper; and the increasingly widespread access to online newspapers also brings a whole new dimension to the issue of newspaper-reading as a conduit for the imagining of simultaneity.

the appropriate nationality being promoted by a nationalist novel, we may think more generally, in terms of the anthropological categories of ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ (Delamont 1995). The construction and deconstruction of communities in the text can be regarded as an analogue for the similar processes involved in the inclusion and exclusion of characters and readers from an *explicitly national* in-group. Culler’s point here is that ‘[t]he community of readers that arises from a novel is one in which readers may be both friend and enemy, at once insider and outsider’ (1999: 38), and may be any of these in various different ways, by dint of their belonging to various (imagined) groups.

When Sharp criticises Anderson for his implicit assumption of a ‘national citizen, appropriately cultured’ for the teleological national ‘mission’ (1996: 99), her complaint is based upon his failure to recognise the diversity of discourses that construe a subject, whose identity may well be national, but also lots of other things. The oscillating movement of the implied reader that Culler promulgates, who experiences alternating inclusion and exclusion from various dimensions of the narrative, depending on assumed cultural knowledge and, sometimes, ignorance, opens up the possibility of a destabilised, decentred national model reader. This reader would be the site of multiple narratives, as Craig reiterates: ‘people live simultaneously in several narratives; their identity is not unity – it is precisely the intersection of diverse but contiguous narratives’ (1996: 223). Novels which subvert the spatio-temporal heterodoxy of national(ist) teleological history, and therefore, with it, the unity of their national subjects, project – demand – a model reader who displays all the cultural heterogeneity of the postnational condition. That this is just

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another form of orthodoxy, the symptom of our archive, goes without saying. Being torn between identities, or living on borderlines, is how we live. Therefore Culler's reader is reminiscent of Bhabha's postmodern subject, caught up in the trope of the beyond, and moving between, we might say, in-groups and out-groups:

'we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion [...] It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.' (1994: 1-2)

Bhabha's phrasing is replete with movement – no subject is centred or settled – but what is also important is the idea of *negotiation* of identity. We move beyond Anderson's term of fiction 'seeping' into reality, and see that the text is also caught up in the process of negotiation of the subject's shifting constitution. Umberto Eco's circuitous theory of how the text produces its model reader – *intentio operis* – allows for this notion of exchange without settling:

'The initiative of the reader basically consists in making a conjecture about the text intention [...] The empirical reader is only an actor who makes conjectures about the kind of Model Reader postulated by the text. Since the intention of the text is basically to produce a Model Reader able to make conjectures about it, the initiative of the Model Reader consists in figuring out a Model Author that is not the empirical one and that, at the end, coincides with the intention of the text.' (1990: 55)

Eco actually already assumes that the model reader is split into two roles: a naïve and a critical reader. This is useful to us in conceptualising how the double and split, ironic and nationalistic, nature of Danish *nationalfølelse* can be incorporated into a model reader; how the performative and pedagogical roles of readers can be reconciled in the text. Eco explains:

‘[W]hen I say that every text designs its own Model Reader, I am in fact implying that many texts aim at producing two Model Readers, a first level, or a naïve one, supposed to understand semantically what the text says, and a second level, or critical one, supposed to appreciate the way in which the text says so [...] A mystery tale displays an astute narrative strategy in order to produce a naïve Model Reader eager to fall into the traps of the narrator (to feel fear or to suspect the innocent one) but usually wants to produce also a critical Model Reader able to enjoy, at a second reading, the brilliant narrative strategy by which the first-level, naïve reader was designed.’ (1990: 57)

The postnational model reader (PMR), then, will utilise his or her experience of national(ist) pedagogy to recognise the elements of national history in the text, but will simultaneously be party to the constructedness of that same national historiography; will have an encyclopedic (or limited) knowledge of historical event, but will simultaneously enjoy a postmodern or ironic slant on national identity (*det specielt danske er, at man har den slags specialister*). Every *empirical* reader will, of course, constitute a unique combination of these knowledges and attitudes. An oscillation reminiscent of Ernst Renan’s famous formulation that the nation, all at once, is as much about forgetting as remembering (see Chapter 4).

This PMR, then, underlies the discussion that develops throughout the thesis, and especially in Chapter 4 and the Conclusion, on the relationship between (post)national novel and (post)national reader; in short, on the potential of the novel to conduct and negotiate national imaginings.

### **4.3. (Post)national literary histories**

Staying with the issue of the implied reader, Culler touches on the further complications implied by the translation of novels and their presence on the

international literary market. This is an interesting point, because the removal of a novel from its 'native' context has implications for the reader's perception of its 'aboutness' – banal or otherwise – as well as for the group membership of the implied reader. In the cinematic context, as Hjort points out (2000: 106), a film may address one or more communities – local, regional or international. However, in the case of literature, a process of translation (as opposed to subtitling) is required before novels, at least those written in a minor language, can address themselves to an international audience. This observation reveals the anachronistic attribution of national boundaries to literary history, an issue that Chapter 2 seeks to address in the context of the flagged intertextuality and international literary genealogy of Høeg's *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*.

Hans Hauge, more or less alone among Danish literary theorists, has argued provocatively for a postnational literary history that would respond not only to the reality of increasing ethnic diversity in Denmark but also to Danish historians' sensitivity to the posthistorical. But this arrangement is based in a logic that combines both commercial and cultural considerations: the 'fatal diversity of human language' (Anderson 1991: 45) means that the dissemination of texts beyond the boundaries of their source language entails translation costs that are measured in money, time and semantics (this last dimension of translation 'loss', with its many controversies, is the basis for a whole discipline, Translation Studies). The idea that the fatal diversity of languages can be redeemed by the concomitant prodigious uniqueness of those same tongues goes back to Herder (Østergård 1992: 89). As such, it has been summarily deconstructed by contemporary historians of the nation, including Mørch, who gathers together the threads of the national and political 'awakening' in mid-nineteenth

century Denmark under the chapter title ‘At tale dansk’ (1996: 105-12). The right to speak Danish was the catalyst for the ‘national’ movement that was kindled in Slesvig and spread northwards, disseminating the self-fulfilling prophecy of linguistic, and therefore ethnic, homogeneity. Accordingly, Hauge sees the function of modern literary histories, like national histories, as ‘civilisatorisk’, an integral part of the congruence of what, after Østergård, he identifies as the triad of modernisation, industrialisation and democratisation – i.e., the standard ‘modernist’ theory of nation-building. As late as the 1960s, argues Hauge, Danish literary history declared itself a supplement to Danish history, the fruit of a ‘dannevirkearbejde’ against the trojan horse of European economic integration (1999: 3). However, he goes on, the centrality of a national language to literary texts – the very object of literary histories – logically precludes the writing of a literary counterpart to Mørch’s *Den sidste Danmarkshistorie* (1996). This is because such a postnational literary history would have to unpick the connection between Danishness and Danish language; this could only be done ‘ved at slette metaforen om folket som en person, dvs. som forfatter til dansk litteratur’. The multilingual, multiethnic *helstat* whose loss heralded the *post hoc* construction by nineteenth-century historians of a continuous historical narrative of the rump state of Denmark would reveal the artificiality of Danish as a homogeneous, national language from time immemorial. ‘Danish’ literature, like ‘Danish’ history, could then be disrobed as a construction – but it would be dead (ibid.). Literary histories, we might say, are the nation’s last stand. This is not to assume, of course, that the tenets on which national literary histories are written cannot be unpicked by the very texts that are manhandled into place in the national canonical line-up, as this thesis tries to show.

To reiterate: the model reader of a novel written in Danish belongs to a community that is much more clearly demarcated than the model reader of a novel written in a ‘world-language’ (such as English) or in a language spoken in several ‘nations’. One could, predictably, object by saying that even within the Danish-speaking community there are many culturally-distinct groupings. There are always communities within communities, regardless of whether we are speaking of empirical individuals or model readers. What I want to argue is that, due to the exceptionally homogeneous pedagogical imaginings of the Danish nation in terms of culture and language, as well as the low incidence of literary translation out of Danish, the implied first person plural in a given Danish text corresponds to a community whose boundaries are more easily imagined than is the case in most ‘national’ literatures. In other words, if a model reader is addressed, by whatever means, in Danish, part of the implication is that *s/he is Danish*. The implicit *vi* may include or exclude from the textual community, but it is still articulated in Danish, and therefore implicates the model reader in the national context in which the text is produced. This is the import of Hauge’s observation that a particular ‘ikke-artikuleret sprogteori’, the vague feeling that language and thought are identical and that languages only obtain as national languages, is especially strong in Denmark (Hauge 1998: 78). This is, clearly, a vicious circle of the linguistic imagination based on what Anderson calls a ‘unified field of exchange and connection [...] through print’ (1991: 44). The number of initiates (speakers) is finite, and the language system itself is fixed in print; Denmark is exceptional in that the spread of its national print-language is commensurate with its geographical boundaries.

Culler's claim that the novel posits a space in which the implied reader may function as friend or enemy is thus rendered more complex: the implied reader may belong to an in-group or an out-group in the textual world, but his/her membership of the national group is assumed by virtue of a shared language. In this way, the distinction between novels whose *form* facilitates national imagining, and those whose content is actually *about* the nation in some way, is blurred. The thrust of my argument, then, is that the three Danish novels under consideration are all 'about' Denmark in some way, although they emphasise 'nationness' as perennial theme and topical theme in different ways. The textual community implicates the PMR on the basis of language, banal themes of nation, national knowledge, and so on, construing an analogue for the shifting boundaries of nationness, and working within negotiated confines of a national literary history.

What is excluded from or included in a national canon is, of course, also a question of negotiation and nation. It is a question of negotiation because, as Middleton & Woods insist, genres are not fixed parameters into which texts must fit snugly, but constantly shifting codes of practice that are negotiated between text, reader, publisher, academic, reviewer, and so on (2000: 7). The fatal diversity of language ensures, though, that for most cultures, this negotiation takes place within a linguistically-demarcated national context. It would be short-sighted to insist that genre is not negotiated across and between different national literary traditions, of course, but as long as literary histories are 'national', one variable in the definition of genre will be national origin.

The three novels in this study must be situated in the context of the prevailing parameters of genre in 1990s Denmark. Erik Skyum-Nielsen (2000) and Gitte Mose (2002) have identified the strongest tendencies of the decade as the *punkroman* and the *encyklopædisk* text, that is, the telescopic zooming in to a particular moment in time, and the impulse to write the world in all its prodigious facticity. Danish literature of the 1990s, Skyum-Nielsen says, was caught between ‘implosion og eksplosion’ (2000: 39). These three novels display both tendencies, with their concern, on the one hand, for the fractal, refracting *øjeblik*, the subjective and multidimensional apprehension of time, and, on the other hand, the myriad things and people in the world, the heterogeneity of experiences and points of view, in short, of hi/stories. Like the global and the local, the two dynamics are two sides of the same coin; what better way to tell the hi/stories of that incredibly complex, imagined and yet not imaginary, ordered and disorderly, entity: the nation?

## Chapter 2

### A Longing for Order

#### Peter Høeg: *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* (1988)

‘A chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history.’ (Benjamin 1999: 246)

#### 1. The post-colonial context

Peter Høeg’s *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* (1999; 1988) is the central – foundational – text in this study. It interrogates the relationship between fact and fiction, between historiography and the novel, and it does so in a self-conscious manner. These generic concerns of historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon 2002: 47) betray, in this novel, not only a preoccupation with the conditions of textual production in literature, but also a concern to de-doxify the parameters of national narrative using textual strategies of post-colonial pastiche. *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* reflects on its own role in the subversion and construction of national history through an alchemy of order and chaos, eschatology and scatology.

While no national literary canon can isolate itself from international developments in literature, certain dissenting voices in Danish cultural criticism have recently complained that the academy – the authorities on Danish Literary History – are still failing to engage with what is arguably the most influential stream of Western literary theory of the last decade: postcolonial criticism. Hans Hauge (2000) attacks the latest edition of *Danske digtere i det 20. århundrede*, edited by Anne-Marie Mai (2000), for its timidity in conforming to what the market wants: *forfatterportrætter*. He also points out that only a handful of Danish writers – Peter Høeg, Carsten Jensen and Ib Michael are the obvious examples – have actually engaged with the historical fact that



Denmark is a postcolonial state. In his review of *Danske digtere*, Hauge, paraphrasing Carsten Jensen's famous title *Jeg har set verden begynde* (1996), makes the pertinent observation that:

‘*Danske digtere*, imod sin egen intention og gode vilje, kommer til at indgå i en serie af nationale oprustningsforsøg spændende fra det evige danske nej til Europa, over Grundtvig-bølge, Kaj Munk-rehabilitering til den nationale musical Egtved-pigen – Og det var Danmark. ‘Har nogen set verden begynde?’

Peter Høeg's second novel, *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (1992) is the one identified by Hauge as Denmark's first postcolonial novel. However, the present study will argue that Høeg's first novel, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, is in essence also a postcolonial text in a broad sense: that it engages with the instability of national identity as one of the grand narratives of the modern era. As such, it ought to be contextualised not only as a Danish novel but also as a text functioning in an international context. This chapter's treatment of the text as a novel of nationness – as a text sited at the meeting point of fiction, ethnography and historiography – flows from this starting point.

### **1.1. The Latin American genesis: *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and the postnational novel**

It is often the case that text and translation can work together in an illuminating fashion. In this case, the choice of title in the English version of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* bears examination. *The History of Danish Dreams* (1997; first published 1995) is a mistranslation of the source text's first line: ‘Dette er De danske Drømmes Historie’, which transfers the definite article from ‘dreams’ to ‘history’. This suppresses the text's flagging of its own contingency, as one possible hi/story.

Moreover, the national identification of the novel is made clearer in the translated title, while the title of the source text privileges the more general category of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> This is perhaps a minor, semantic point, but it reveals a shift in emphasis on the international market from the category of ‘time’ to that of ‘place’. This distinction is important in the discussion to follow, for this shift also obscures the reference in the Danish title to the novel’s progenitor. *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* flaunts its own genesis in the novels of the Latin American Boom, its title nudging up against Gabriel García Márquez’s *Cien Años de Soledad* (1967), translated by Gregory Rabassa as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970; all references to this novel hereafter are based on the English translation), but Høeg’s novel offers up a veritable orgy of intertexts: Joyce, Blixen, Rushdie, Grundtvig... as one shell-shocked American reviewer muses: ‘I mean, Høeg has read *everybody*. Like the severed head of the European novel, he howls down the centuries’ (Leonard 1995: 642).

*Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* is, then, a Danish intertext to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – but only for those Danish readers who recognise the allusions to the older novel in the title and throughout the text. Readers unfamiliar with García Márquez’s novel, and therefore unresponsive to the blatant intertextuality of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, will necessarily experience quite a different text from those who have read both (this is, of course, not to say that either reading is ‘better’ than the other). Thomas Illum Hansen (1999: 190) has already noticed and commented on the inspirational role played by *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. He briefly remarks on Høeg’s rejection of the traditional ‘biographical’ form of the novel

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<sup>4</sup> The choice of title for the UK market was made by the publisher, Harvill (personal communication from the translator, Barbara Haveland)

as insufficient for the all-encompassing scale of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*: '[s]om titlen angiver, har han derimod fundet inspiration i Gabriel García Márquez' *Hundrede års ensomhed* (1967) og dens magiske realisme til en dækkende udtryksform, der overskrider den biografiske tid og det realistiske rum.' (sic)

However, he does not develop this relationship much further than the strategy of magical realism they share: '[b]egge romaner bygger en forunderlig verden op ved at tage skrøner, sladder og groteske overdrivelser på ordet. Herved indskrives det mundtligt overleverede i en skriftbevidst helhed, der tolker det billedlige bogstaveligt.' The relationship between these two novels is much more multi-faceted and requires to be excavated in more depth, which the present chapter tries to do.

Beverley Allen (1995) identifies a new breed of 'postnational novel', which helps to explain the commercial relationship between Márquez' and Høeg's novels. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is one example, she argues, of the well-known phenomenon of novels whose natural habitat is not their own country but the world stage (other examples provided by Allen include Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, 1988, and Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, 1984).

Timothy Brennan, too, has identified a similar list of what he terms 'Third World' novelists of nation and exile on the world stage: 'a trend of cosmopolitan commentators on the Third World, who offer an *inside view* of formerly submerged peoples for target reading publics in Europe and North America in novels that comply with metropolitan literary tastes' (Brennan 1990: 63). We might say that, between the publication of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and that of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, readers have become accustomed to novels which expose a national identity other than their own. This places the reader's own identity in a relative light:

it ‘contains the possibility that the viewer’s own national identity will take on [...] a sense of arbitrariness, even perhaps a tinge of virtual exchangeability in a world of floating rates of national identity exchange’ (Allen 1995: 103). This seems to hit the nail right on the head: on the one hand, national identity becomes a *commodity* in Harvey’s sense of an ‘image commodity’ or simulacrum (1990: 289) (the rise of international tourism cannot be an unrelated phenomenon), and, on the other, one’s own national identity becomes at once not only relative but also open to analysis in the same way as that of the Other. National (or ethnic) identities are reduced to sets of symbols which are, quite literally, manufactured, sold, and taken home in suitcases. At a more abstract level of cultural production, televisual, cinematic or literary output can be considered to have a synecdochic function; imported soap operas and films, as well as translated novels, are often marketed as slices of life from their country of origin, throwing into relief the ‘domesticness’ of native output.

*Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* may be expected to function in a certain corner of the Danish market alongside such works as *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Midnight’s Children*, etc., in two ways. Firstly, it takes up the same themes as the postnational novel which, in Allen’s words, ‘provides representations of the individual [...] as highly determined by national identity; but it places that identity in a new context’ (101). Danish national identity starts to fluctuate on the (inter)national currency market alongside all the other ‘minor’ or postcolonial identities.

Secondly, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* functions as an ethnographic novel, like the other two novels in this study, but in adopting the strategy of magical realism, the text infects the nation it describes with a spatio-temporal disjunction inherent in

magical realist narrative. In grafting itself onto *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* invites us to read it as a magical realist novel, and we can in fact do so without serious reservations. It fuses fantastical events with everyday life, takes metaphors literally, juxtaposes the irrational to the rational and the supernatural to the natural, makes a mockery of historical cause and effect, flags its own textuality, and all in a measured and credulous tone. A postcolonial pastiche, certainly; but by its metafictional, hyperbolic nature, magical realism is always already primed to out-pastiche itself (Zamora & Farris 1995: 1-3). It is the competing ontologies immanent in the magical realist text that frustrate the national longing for order and wholeness, for a perfectly-wrapped and manufactured identity that could be floated on the market. In what follows, the de-doxifying effects on *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* of its progenitor and of magical realism will be explored in more detail.

## **1.2. Anthropology and the novel**

Roberto González Echevarría, in an article of 1984, and later in the monograph *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Literature* (1998), suggests a fruitful way of looking at the connection between the magical realist novel and its context of production. The novel in general, he argues, has no fixed form, and thus relies for its interpretation on a contemporary 'truth-bearing' discourse. The power to imbue the text with this truth-bearing capacity is extratextual, and changes along with the vagaries of the social dispensation of authority. Echevarría goes on to discuss the development of the Latin American novel, which is his primary concern, in relation to the truth-bearing documents of various periods. That of the nineteenth century was typically the scientific treatise or travelogue. The modern novel, he claims, is

mediated by anthropology, or, rather, by the anthropological treatise. This mediation is especially pertinent to modern Latin American literature; many of the key texts of Western anthropology have taken cultures of that region as their object. The double bind of anthropology – ‘[i]n order to understand another culture, the anthropologist has to know his own to the point where he can distance himself from it’ (1984: 364) – assumes that the observer in the field can achieve complete objectivity and self-effacement, a possibility which most social theorists today would dispute.

Echevarría, then, interprets the modern Latin American novel – specifically *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – as a self-reflexive anthropological mimicry. Instead of playing the role of anthropological object allotted to it by the West, Latin American fiction assumes the mantle of the subject, and all that this role entails in terms of cultural self-effacement with the purpose of understanding. To comprehend the history of the continent, Echevarría argues, the Latin American novel must find a ground-zero of history, awarding the status of myth, of strange and primitive belief, to its own (imposed) history.

This constitutes a subversion of the status of object-other traditionally assigned to non-Western societies by Western anthropology. The so-called ‘timeless’ or ‘primitive’ myths of Latin America and of other post-colonial regions have traditionally been studied as a means to understanding the cultural identity of the West. Not until the 1960s (Hastrup 1992a: 1) did anthropology seriously question one of its founding assumptions: that non-European societies were also non-historical societies, whose myths accounted for the structure of a changeless culture and,

therefore, could be used to shed light on the originary culture of the West, before it started off down the linear path of progress and enlightenment.

In the case of Latin American fiction, then, the reclaiming of the status of ethnographic observer is part and parcel of a subversion of dominant, Westcentric approaches to the production of scientific knowledge and cultural creation (or, at least, it has been interpreted as such by the same Westcentric tradition).

Transplanting the above literary arguments to the Danish tradition may initially seem absurd. Denmark belongs to the Western tradition, and participated in the age of European colonialism, though not on a grand scale. Denmark cannot claim to have been denied its own history or national identity by colonial powers, but it cannot escape the *condition* of the postcolonial, that is, the negotiation of its demographic and cultural aftermath. Denmark may even be seen as one of the last of the colonial powers, having retained her sovereignty and her paternal instinct with regard to Greenland and the Faro Islands. A not unrelated observation is that Denmark, until the early nineteenth century, was a multilingual, multiethnic state, encompassing not only the aforementioned islands but also Norway and Iceland within the *helstat*, the ‘whole’ or common state. Two centuries of national and literary history writing have conspired to homogenise the vast cultural production and diverse social experience of these lands into a coherent and continuous *Danmarkshistorie* – a ‘metastory’, in Echevarría’s terms – which only now is being unpacked by Danish historians (Østergaard 1992, 1998; Mørch 1996).

Fredric Jameson has shown how the material manifestations of decolonisation and national ‘liberations’ of the 1960s and 1970s have been absorbed in the West as a new kind of ‘global’ self-consciousness:

‘The West thus has the impression that without much warning and unexpectedly it now confronts a range of genuine individual and collective subjects who were not there before, or not visible, or – using Kant’s great concept – were still *minor* and under tutelage’ (Jameson 1991: 356, emphasis in original)

Jameson pessimistically interprets the liberal ideology of tolerance of different identities as a ‘yuppie phenomenon’ (1991: 341) which is only possible in effectively homogeneous societies, an observation which is extremely pertinent to the contemporary negotiation, in Denmark, of responses to the the ‘unexpected’ arrival of ‘visible’ ethnic subjects who have emerged from their Greenlandic tutelage or arrived from elsewhere. Bhabha’s insistence that the performance of minority discourses within the contemporary nation is not merely a ‘free play’ of differences in homogeneous empty time but a temporal disjunction (1994: 162) is influenced by Jameson’s suspicion of ‘liberal’ group-formation, and encapsulates the problematic of the postcolonial condition in the West: how to negotiate, rather than sublate or assimilate, cultural difference and its representations.

But Denmark, as a small European state, experiences a double-edged postcolonial condition. The economic and cultural effects of globalisation – however we are to define such a phenomenon – have tended to reproduce certain aspects of the experience of colonisation in small states: economic exploitation by foreign businesses, the all-pervading presence of world languages and of the cultural and economic products and *mores* of the ‘colonising’ powers. Haunting both the



construction and deconstruction of *Danmarkshistorien* has been the spectre of declining power, influence and geographical size, repeated defeat and occupation, and, perhaps more potent, that of the humiliation of repeated ‘lucky escapes’. As Søren Mørch has observed, Denmark ought not logically to exist today as a sovereign state (1996: 57. *fortælling*). The liberal tolerance of difference can also be conceived of on an international scale, still as ‘a matter of fashion and the market’ (Jameson 1991: 341). This is where the identities of small states jostle with the identities of formerly colonised states, as Allen describes.

*Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, then, adopts certain historiographic and ethnographic strategies, which are often – but not exclusively, as we shall see – associated with the postcolonial magical realist novel. This sites Høeg’s novel at the intersection of competing discourses of political power, cultural identity, and even genre and canon. We now turn to look at what kind of national spacetime is formed at this juncture.

## **2. Disjunctive hi/stories: archival spacetime**

### **2.1. Myth versus History: the archival novel**

The political hangover from the colonial era is not the only reason why magical realism seems to flourish in southerly latitudes. It has also been attributed to the unique constellation of history, myth and climate of Latin America, partly pre-dating the colonial era, as Danow romantically describes it:

‘This absolute disjuncture in basic perceptions of the world is situated at the core of a transnational literature designed to account for events and possibilities that are immanent, even uniquely inherent, to the southern hemisphere of the Americas, where the intrusion of the jungle into city

life is an ever-present threat; where the mix of different peoples, with their various myths and beliefs, fomenting like intrusions the business of daily life, results in remarkable blendings and certain tensions; and where these tensions are manifested in perpetual political conflict.’ (1995: 71)

While the socio-political and climatic situation in Latin America may be unique, that region does not have a monopoly on the problematic of myth versus reality. Derek Littlewood argues for the shape-shifting properties of ‘magic realism’ in Bakhtinian terms: ‘Magic realism is a migratory concept, a constantly re-accentuated and retranslated mode of writing that is reflective on oral storytelling and the novel tradition in ways which recall the epic and gesture towards the postmodern’ (2001: 192-3). Indeed, Jameson sees the ideal conditions for magical realism *wherever* different cultures or historical periodisations co-exist in a single cultural space, such as Eastern Europe (cited in Mikics 1995: 373).

Magical realism therefore implies a hybridity of cultural or spatio-temporal conceptions of the world. David Danow, amongst others, therefore reads magical realism as ‘carnivalised’ literature. The spirit of carnival, as manifested for example in the popular festivals of medieval Europe – the eternal human urge to upset convention, subvert power relations, celebrate the body and the senses, display the grotesque – can be refracted in literature, as a sub-type of heteroglossia (Holquist 1981: xix). But Danow stresses that this is a two-sided coin: ‘the bright carnivalesque is seen to elide with the dark grotesque’ (Danow 1995:9):

‘When a similar spirit permeates a work of literature...it supports the unsupportable, assails the unassailable, at times regards the supernatural as natural, takes fiction as truth, and makes the extraordinary or “magical” as viable a possibility as the ordinary or “real”, so that no true distinction is perceived or acknowledged between the two.’ (1995: 3).

This immediately problematises the basic assumption of readerly knowledge made by the historical novel, that is, that the access to historical pedagogy enables the ‘national’ reader to distinguish between fact and fiction. This is crucial for our consideration of the deconstruction of national history in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, because in carnivalised literature, we see the official (pedagogical) self in a dialogic exchange with the unofficial Other.

Echevarría observes that ‘the modern Latin American novel transforms Latin American history into originary myth in order to see itself as other’ (1984: 365). History is ‘unwritten’ and takes on the status of myth, which assumes a *duality* of myth and history. However, Echevarría’s end-point, and the context in which he interprets *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and other fictions of the postcolonial period, is a further mutation of the ethnographic novel, one which engages with the prevailing anxiety in literary theory as to the fictionality of historiography, and echoes the scepticism of anthropologists themselves as to the validity of the techniques and representations of ethnography. This is the ‘archival’ novel. In short: ‘the difference between archival fictions and their predecessors is that they pretend to be literature, not any other hegemonic form of discourse, yet in so doing they are in fact in a mimetic relationship with current anthropology’ (1998:173). The problem lies in language itself, in writing, in the conceit of any literature that purports to represent the Other. For even when the colonised Other attempts to redress the balance and represent itself, collecting, analysing, ‘making strange’ its own histories as the ‘myths’ of an anthropologist’s notebook, the process and product of analysis boils down to the same thing: selection, evaluation, omission, storytelling.

*Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* plays with this postmodern anxiety about the fictionality of historiography. The narrator, Mads, dances around the status of the document he is producing, until late on in the text, when he declares that it is not a novel: ‘vi kan i det hele taget alle glæde os over at dette her ikke er en roman’ (Høeg 1999: 240). This statement would appear to have the same function as Magritte’s painting of a pipe above the words ‘Ceci n’est pas un pipe’: it appears to state the opposite of the truth, but in fact is entirely truthful. The painting of the pipe is not a pipe, but a painting of one. Is this novel, then, not a novel, but some form of reproduction of one? And if so, what kind? The game is not wildly original, of course; Echevarría is not alone in claiming that ‘[t]he most persistent characteristic of books that have been called novels in the modern era is that they always pretend not to be literature.’ (1998: 7). Indeed, Bakhtin recognises this particular characteristic of the novel: ‘The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them.’ (1981: 5).

Here, though, Mads’ statement sets us to thinking in particular about the boundaries between novel and historiography; for if Carsten is *not* a historical figure, as the narrator claims he *is*, how can it be proven that he is not? And when the cool narrator finally reveals himself to be one of the novel’s characters, does this immediately discount and fictionalise all that he has said with regard to Danish dreams? This quandary also governs our attitude to the status of the numerous historical Danish personages who make cameo appearances in the novel, hovering just on the boundary between textual and extratextual worlds. Indeed, Haveland’s English translation

provides a 'Biographical List of Real-Life Characters' in an attempt to ensure that the delicate balance between knowledge of fact and suspension of disbelief can to some degree be maintained for the British reader. The list is justified by the translator thus: 'since the descriptions of these real people [...] also involve certain fictional touches, non-Danes might find it difficult to tell the difference between fact and fiction' (Høeg 1997: 335). This strategy would make sense in the context of the traditional historical novel, in which a 'mobilization of previous historical knowledge' instigates a 'narrative dialectic' between historical and textual personage (Jameson 1991 23; see also White 1999: 67-8). But just as Mads undermines his own narrative authority and personhood by declaring himself with the Danish expression of disbelief 'fra nu af kan I kalde mig Mads' (Høeg 1999: 334), so too do his historical characters tend to be undermined as such by their involvement in some magical realist or scatological situation. Ole Rømer, for example, turns up in the timeless swamp of Mørkhøj to indulge the Count's excavations in search of the centre of the earth, but deflates him in an earthy idiolect: 'ved De hvad, hør her, en fidus, fra den ene kollega til den anden: Jorden er rund, og derfor har den centrum over det hele, og alt hvad man finder når man graver, det er lort' (Høeg 1999: 13). And Thorvald Stauning, whose very name is synonymous with the narrator's determined struggle against chaos – his WWII election slogan was *Stauning eller kaos* – is said to live in Anna's magical sinking tenement building (127, 135).

In any case, true to the pattern of the archival novel, Mads constantly downplays not only his own authority, but also the authority of official documents, traditional sources, and the written word in general, and explores the connections and

conventions that govern society's interpretation of itself. Another pivotal statement in the novel concerns the gaps between the documents:

‘Det har noget at gøre med historieskrivning, historien er altid en opfindelse, det er et eventyr bygget over nogle spor. Sporene er der ingen problemer med [...] de fleste af dem kan ligefrem lægges på bordet så enhver kan røre ved dem, men de er desværre ikke historien, historien består af forbindelsen imellem dem, og det er den der giver problemer.’ (1999: 145)

These comments are made in connection with the narrator's investigation into the character Maria's early life; this is where his play with the traditional textual tools of historians interacts most closely with his self-doubt. What counts, for Mads, is human experience. The memories of Maria's parents – that she went to school daily from the age of seven – conflict with the official documents which can list the misdemeanours of a juvenile delinquent known as the Stammerer (probably Maria). The police reports fail to pin down the identity of the child in question, and the other members of the gang, we are told, are untraceable, having been thrown into special schools, forcibly sterilised, or jailed. Turning to a photograph of the children, the narrator still finds himself frustrated at his inability to understand their existence:

‘Selv nu, i dag, for mig, trykker fotografiet, og får mig til at ønske at jeg kunne forklare hvad det udsiger, men det går ikke, for hver gang jeg åbner munden så er sentimentaliteten der som en historisk klump i halsen der gør at det er bedre at lade *samtiden* tale [...]’ (1999: 147, my emphasis)

And the voice of ‘*samtiden*’ is the voice of authority, interpreting the children's behaviour in the light of the sociological theory of the time. It will not suffer from the emotional weakness that brings a lump to Mads' throat. But the narrator is also more than happy to allow the ordinary characters – his interviewees – to fill the gaps and

make the connections between the clues, and is credulous as to their subjective experiences.

*Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* thus responds to Denmark's late twentieth century post-colonial predicament – what does it mean to be Danish today? – but also holds up a mirror to a novel which (according to Echevarría) is *already* holding up a mirror to the discredited 'science' of ethnography that informs both texts. The chain of reflection that results is what undermines the structure of knowledge and the duality of myth and history.

Clearly, the concern of these archival novels is to work through what troubles philosophers of history such as Hayden White: the culturally-determined construction of historical and fictional narratives. Accordingly, what the figure of the archive contains – and Echevarría's term seems to come straight from Foucault – is not merely the totality of documents of a culture, but the rules and conventions that govern their use, circulation, retention or destruction (Foucault 1998: 309).

Echevarría sees the archive's function as dispersive, not collective, in contrast to previous incarnations of the Latin American novel, whose dependence on the discourses of the law, science, and anthropology led them to gather, store and label knowledge in a place of authority, whether in the form of legal texts, botanical collections, or lists of myths. The novel's 'grab-bag approach to history' empowers it to 'question received knowledge and its ideological coagulations as identity, culture, educational institutions, even language'. The archival novel thus cracks open the storehouses of knowledge and 'unleashes a ghostly procession of figures of negation,

inhabitants of the fissures and cracks which hover around the covenant of writing and the law.’ (1998: 34)

The archival novel thus releases a variety of voices and versions of the national narrative, fissuring the stronghold of the truth-bearing discourses or, we might venture, grand narratives. Thus the archive is one literary manifestation of a more general postmodern reiteration of the possibilities afforded by narratives that are less than coherent, stable and authoritative. It problematises several categories of knowledge, including the very possibility of knowledge itself, in the Western tradition; the kind of knowledge with which, in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, Sorø Akademi is said to imbue its students, that is, the ‘indiskutable sandheder’ (Høeg 1999: 271) of linear time, origins, and facticity. All the fripperies of modernity – linear historical time, science, hygiene, the law – all these are locked into the enclosed textual world of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* with the carnivalesque and grotesque versions of Danish history, and left to thrash out their differences.

## **2.2. The myth of origins: beginnings (and endings)**

In the Latin American context, the persistence of *myth* is central to the subversive impulse, in part because the object of study for Western anthropology was precisely what it identified as myth. For Echevarría, myth is the key to the postmodern turn in archival fictions, for the modern anthropological dogma of myth as an ‘other’ history has been superseded by the postmodern dogma of pluralism, which is at once a subversion of Western or national grand narrative, and a search for its own masterstory. ‘The Archive culls and loses, it cannot brand or determine. The Archive



cannot coalesce as a national or cultural myth, though its make-up still reveals a longing for the creation of such a grandiose politico-cultural metastory' (Echevarría 1998: 174-5). The lack of truth-bearing document in postmodernity results in an escape into literature, which the archive thematises, claims Echevarría, as relativistic and multifarious, without ever being able to do away with its own narrative coherence: '[m]ythification is a version of the masterstory of escape from the strictures of the dominant discourse through fusion with one of the main objects of that discourse: myth' (ibid.)

The 'subversion or sub-version' of the metanarrative of the nation which the archive produces manifests itself both thematically (national genealogy) and 'semiotically' (topoi of the archive) (ibid.) in text as the myth of origins. In the case of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, accordingly, we see the origins of the Danish nation being thematised as beginnings and endings, as genealogy (see section 3.1), and as sites of knowledge (see section 2.3.1).

Echevarría singles out *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as the novel which, more than any other, escapes from the anthropological bind and – one might say – from the reductive dialectic of 'Europe and the people without history'. What García Márquez has done is to 'substitute the anthropologist for a historian, and to turn the object of attention away from myth as an expression of so-called primitive cultures to the myths of a modern society: the book, reading, writing, instruments of a quest for self-knowledge that lie beyond the solace mythical interpretations of the world usually afford' (1998: 29). To this list of modern myths we might add the writing of history itself.

The origin of familial and national history (de danske Drømmes Historie) comes with the ‘launching’ of time at Mørkhøj after its enforced stagnation for several generations. Like *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* must begin in 'The-Valley-Where-Time-Has-Stopped' (Echevarría 1998: 17), a ground-zero of history. The textual and temporal beginnings and endings of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* constitute arguably the most important sites of the ‘grafting’ of the former onto the latter. They are also crucial because, in order to overcome the persistence of the idea of the nation as linear historical narrative – that it has, so to speak, a beginning, a middle and an end – the text must present a *forestilling* of the beginning and ending of national history, and, in so doing, demonstrate the constructedness and the contingency of the temporal boundaries of the nation.

The first passage, below, is taken from the end of the first chapter of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, which is set in the walled feudal town of Mørkhøj. The Count of Mørkhøj had, in his quest to prove that the town stood at the centre of a flat earth, effectively abolished the passage of time some two centuries before, condemning the townspeople to an existence marked by biological, genealogical and cultural stagnation, in complete isolation from the outside world. However, Carl Laurids, the precocious adopted son of the estate steward, has rediscovered the lost concept of chronological development, and has decoded the town records to reveal that Mørkhøj – like the dying Count himself – is subject to the course of history, and must rejoin the rest of Denmark as it celebrates New Year’s Day 1918:

‘Den seng hvori Greven lå mens Carl Laurids læste op, var blevet stillet op i laboratoriet, under det store hul i taget gennem hvilket Grevens maskiner var rettet mod det himmelske ækvator, og nu læste Carl Laurids bagud i historien [...] Men i stedet for at læse præcis hvad der stod, så læste han med stadig hensyn til sin egen opdagelse af forandringens love, og under læsningen der blev ved uge efter uge, kom han og Greven på så nært hold som de aldrig før havde været, og det som bragte dem sammen var det ene afgørende spørgsmål som også interesserer os andre, om tiden virkelig fandtes[...]

‘Greven [var] lænket til sengen, og der var ikke mere noget der kunne stoppe Carl Laurids mens han bevægede sig frem mod nutiden og læste om køernes og hestenes og folkenes indavl og om musikernes død og om kvægpesten [...] Da Grevens øjne sløredes og begyndte at glide i, vendte Carl Laurids foliobindets sidste blad og læste om denne nytårsnat og om hvem der var tilstede og om hvad der var blevet serveret ved bordet. Da slog den døende en sidste gang øjnene op og så lige på sin sekretær, og i det øjeblik hørtes fra gården vægtersangen.’ (Høeg 1999: 25-7)

The discovery of change in the old records plants the germ of the possibility of linear time – ‘historiens gang’ – in Carl Laurids’ mind. In reading his own version of the text to the dying Count, Carl Laurids is ushering in a new era: the old Count’s feudal authority is being replaced by that of the young, educated, middle class man, a development that the Count himself had tried to stall by ordering that Mørkhøj’s clocks be stopped. The instant of reading is itself incorporated into the records; the text is history, and history is the text that drags Mørkhøj into ‘now’, into the twentieth century. From *ordet* comes the new order; but not that ‘order’ that is longed for in the final section of the novel, as we shall see (in section 4).

In contrast, the passage below constitutes not a beginning but an end; it concludes *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. However, the inextricable relationship between history and text is suggested in much the same way. Aureliano, the father of the last of the Buendía line, finally succeeds in interpreting the prophetic texts bequeathed by the gypsy Melquíades to his forefathers, the founders of the village of Macondo. Even as

he reads them, the prophecies come to pass in the time and the world of the text; the text (the novel) read by the reader may or may not be the text read by Aureliano.

‘Aureliano [...] knew then that his fate was written in Melquíades’ parchments. He found them intact among the prehistoric plants and steaming puddles and luminous insects that had removed all trace of man’s passage on earth from the room, and he did not have the calmness to bring them out into the light, but right there [...] he began to decipher them aloud. [...] Macondo was already a fearful whirlwind of dust and rubble being spun about by the wrath of the biblical hurricane when Aureliano skipped eleven pages so as not to lose time with the facts that he knew only too well, and he began to decipher the instant that he was living, deciphering it as he lived it, prophesying himself in the act of deciphering the last page of the parchments, as if he were looking into a speaking mirror. Then he skipped again to anticipate the predictions and ascertain the date and circumstances of his death. Before reaching the final line, however, he had already understood that he would never leave that room, for it was foreseen that the city of mirrors (or mirages) would be wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men at the precise moment when Aureliano Babilonia would finish deciphering the parchments, and that everything written on them was unrepeatable since time immemorial and forever more, because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth.’ (García Márquez 1970: 420-2)

While the passage taken from *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* heralds the start of time, the meshing of text and history at the end of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* heralds textual and historical apocalypse. There is no ‘second opportunity’. This is the end of a self-contained world; Patricia Drechsel Tobin has described the universe of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a Moebius strip, as containing ‘the whole of creation: it actualises within its space a plenitude of possibilities unrecognised in real creation, and in its hundred years it encircles all of man’s time, from Eden to Apocalypse’ (1978: 167). While the Danish Apocalypse has yet to arrive when Mads reaches the end (or the beginning) of his *forestilling*, the echo of the last words of Márquez’s novel can again be heard in the final lines of Høeg’s. A procession of the

generations of the family whose history is explored by the narrator of the novel is passing before the eyes of Mads, the last of the line:

‘[...] og alt dette føler Mads dette øjeblik med en klarhed som efter svære tømmermænd eller lang tids sygdom, og det er ikke fordi han er clairvoyant men fordi han er født til dette århundredes følsomhed og forvirring, og jeg ved hvad jeg taler om, for det er mig der er ham, fra nu af kan I kalde mig Mads, og når jeg holder fast i at jeg vil skrive min families historie, så er det af nødvendighed. [...] [J]eg er sikker på at hvis der ikke bliver gjort noget så bliver der ingen fremtid at se i øjnene, for selvom det meste er usikkert så synes den kommende katastrofe og undergang at være til at stole på [...] og selvfølgelig er jeg bange, for som de glider forbi mig sker det af og til at jeg synes at disse mennesker og deres forestillinger ligner mig selv, af og til får jeg den tanke at måske har jeg aldrig rigtigt *set* andres forventninger men bare mine egne, og den ensomste tanke i verden er tanken om at det vi har fået øje på slet ikke er andre men os selv, men nu er det for sent at tænke sådan og noget må der gøres og før vi kan gøre noget er vi nødt til at gøre os en forestilling om det 20. århundrede.’ (Høeg 1999: 334-5)

The word ‘forestilling’ is satisfyingly polysemic; it evokes not only textual but also theatrical presentation of an idea, and emphasises the subjectivity and multiplicity of possible representations of the century. Hence, ‘forestilling’ is also, pleasingly, semantically commensurable with Bhabha’s ‘performative’. At the ostensible completion of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, this *forestilling* turns out to be only one of many. As Thomas Illum Hansen comments: ‘slutningen bliver begyndelsens begyndelse, og romanen tematiserer den betydningsgivende kraft, der nødvendigvis udgår fra en slutning. Men slutningen er samtidig en ikke-slutning, for ved at afsløre forestillingens subjektivitet sætter fortælleren parentes om de foregående 334 siders udsagn’ (Illum Hansen 1999: 188). *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* mimics the metafictional twist of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, but seems to allow for an infinite number of similar documents, whereas the ‘short-

circuit' effect in Márquez's novel seems to rule out any deviation from the destiny outlined in the 'unrepeatable' parchments.

Fortuitously, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* ends in 1989, the year after publication of the novel, and an especially iconic year in the European imaginary. While the ending-in-the-text of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* might be said to constitute an asymptotic approach to the millennium, an anticipation, or sense of dread at 'den kommende katastrofe og undergang' (334), as discussed in chapter 5 of the present study, the end of this particular *forestilling*, retrospectively, dovetails in a satisfying manner with what many consider to be the events that signalled the 'end of history' in Europe.

### 2.3. Archival time in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*

Central to the subversion of history is, of course, a problematisation of time. 'Time,' declares Hans Henrik Møller, 'is the controlling metaphor of Høeg's criticism of contemporary Western culture, the overt, existential theme for dealing with his characters, and the formal principle of his narratological innovations' (1997: 50). The fascination with and mistrust of time is the red thread running through Høeg's authorship, not least *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, and in this respect, too, the novel both consciously mimics and distances itself from Márquez's play with time in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

#### 2.3.1. The magical metaphors of time

The instability of time is a staple of magical realist fiction. This has often been attributed to the imposition of Western conceptions of time on colonised peoples, not

least Latin America. The dialogical relationship between linear, progressive time and the various manifestations of ‘mythical’ time in Latin American magical realism has often been interpreted as a means of re-asserting the value of indigenous chronologies, reclaiming the discredited category of myth. Myth as metaphor is taken literally with the purpose of subverting its status as object of the (Western) anthropological gaze. Often, the traces of time are troped as natural phenomena such as extreme weather conditions; or subjectively experienced time (a long life, or cyclical patterns, say) are woven into the narrative as factual and tangible.

There are numerous examples of temporal tricks and metaphors made concrete in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*. Maria’s pregnancy, for example, is experienced by her as lasting six years (Høeg 1999:309); Amalie walks out of her father’s office a child and directly into her last day at school (177); and the Old Lady’s death initiates a period of temporal chaos in Rudkøbing, where the writhing of time flings the town from its contemporary state to medieval mud huts and several stages in between, and time liquefies into a stream of mud bubbling into people’s post-boxes where the newspapers are decomposing (49-56).

This last incident represents the final rebellion against ‘industrial time’ (or the time of modernity), the logical culmination of the Old Lady’s discovery that harnessing time was the key to economic success. She herself was the daughter of a nightsoil man, and never learned to read, but established a provincial newspaper whose defining selling-point was the proprietor’s accurate predictions of local, national and world events. Her son and heir follows her linear temporal trajectory, and succeeds in reckoning his daily routine down to the nearest half-second:

‘Christoffer Ludwig *trådte ind i disse rette gader af tid* [...] Christoffers bevægelser var overalt synkroniserede med de utallige ure han passerede på sin vej til kontoret, og de ansatte følte at leveringsdatoer, deadlines og vekslernes forfaldstider havde fortættet sig til *en stoflig atmosfære omkring dem.*’ (36-7, my emphasis)

The spatial imagery here is striking – time is a path lined with clocks to be walked down – and all the more so because the concept of the labyrinth, usually a timeless maze, is later applied to the house with its many corridors. The idea of time as the master of the worker, in the (paradoxically) *patriarchal* figure of the Old Lady, is underscored by the narrator’s comment that her early grasp of the concept of chronological progress – ‘af minutternes og sekundernes uafvendelige vandring’ (35) – is inseparable from her remarkable business sense. The movement towards modernity, from rural society to the provincial business milieu, has its parallel in the shift from an awareness of nothing other than the natural cycles of ‘årstiderne og forskellen mellem nat og dag’ to the visionary insight that time is money. Benedict Anderson could not have said it better. The corollary to this socio-economic developmental trajectory comes much later in the narrative, when Amalie (Christoffer’s daughter) is described as the first character to be rich and female enough to enjoy the luxury of free time (200). It takes only a tiny act of rebellion from Christoffer and Amalie to set in motion the ‘tidskaos’ that besets Rudkøbing a week after the Old Lady’s death.

The first chapter, too, is a treasure-trove of ideas about time, many of which seem to reflect Høeg’s own comment on the multi-dimensionality of experienced time: ‘vi siger tid, jeg tror vi mener to ting: vi mener forandringer, og vi mener noget uforanderligt’ (Sten Pedersen 1997: 9). Time at Mørkhøj has been officially



suspended on pain of death, but the steward keeps on recording events as happening in Year One, the silver still tarnishes and has to be polished, and the moat stagnates because the water-flow designed to keep Ole Rømer's clocks ticking has been stemmed. This last organic process is also reflected in the evolutionary stagnation of the townspeople and the cows. When water stops running, its stagnancy is caused by the breeding of bacteria; while individuals on the estate are condemned to live a grossly distended life-span because they officially never age, breeding goes on as before, but within an unnaturally small gene-pool, isolated from the outside world. When Carl Laurids sits down to read the chronicle of Mørkhøj's eternal Year One, the narrator tries to convey in spatial terms the monumentality of the step he is about to take.

‘Alt hvad vægtersangen havde signaleret var rytmen i dage og nætter der ligesom var *inde i hinanden*, hvis man forstår hvad jeg mener: Før Carl Laurids blev sekretær blev Mørkhøjs døgn ikke *stablet ovenpå hinanden*, det var som om det egentlig bare var den samme dag eller i hvert fald det samme år, år ét, som blev ved med at vende tilbage, og derfor førte tiden ingen steder hen.’ (1999: 23, my emphasis)

What actually alerts Carl Laurids to the passage of time is the irregularities in the regularity, the little things that disappear forever. Absence denotes change. But the discovery and initiation of the passage of time cannot quell other, more stagnant forms of time altogether, and in fact a sense of the days being ‘*inde i hinanden*’ is maintained throughout the novel, as an ordering principle that cross-cuts the universal time that the narrator reluctantly admits ‘*skaber sammenhæng i et referat*’ despite its unreliability (131).

### 2.3.2. The everyday and the epochal

The philosopher *par excellence* of the 'everyday' is Henri Lefebvre, who reminds us that it is impossible to separate the monotony of the everyday from the changes that take place within it:

'In the study of the everyday we discover the great problem of repetition, one of the most difficult problems facing us. The everyday is situated at the intersection of two modes of repetition: the cyclical, which dominates in nature, and the linear, which dominates in processes known as "rational" [...] Some people cry out against the acceleration of time, others cry out against stagnation. They're both right.' (1987: 7)

This suggests that caught up in the question of which events deserve to be treated as history and which are relegated to the oblivion of the everyday are jarring conceptions of time. Events that are regularly repeated are overshadowed by events which promote the 'rational' progress of history, which is itself only an accumulative form of repetition; piling days on top of each other is also repetitive. The intersection of these temporalities is at the heart of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*.

In a free-standing *forord*, the narrator of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* justifies his attempt at writing the History of Danish Dreams by isolating two simultaneous incidents in early spring 1929.<sup>5</sup> These everyday events, he says, are important because they resemble so many others. However, he declares: 'jeg tror at indlejret i mange - ja muligvis i hvilken som helst - af hverdagens begivenheder ligger der et koncentrat af et helt århundrede' (Høeg 1999: 4). This intriguing formulation underlines, firstly, the importance of the *twentieth century* for Høeg's tale. The first

chapter, set in Mørkhøj, actually begins around 1520, but the novel's four central characters are all born somewhere around 1900. More specifically, the century under investigation is the Danish twentieth century, at least if we are to assume that 'vi' refers here to the Danish nation, which is, of course, far from certain: 'Dette er De danske Drømmes Historie, det er et referat af hvad vi har frygtet og drømt og håbet og forventet i dette århundrede' (3). It is by no means the only possible version of the Danish century; it is meant to be 'udtømmende og enkelt' (3), but the means to achieve this end are metonymy and synecdoche: not 'out of many, one' but 'out of many, one of many'. The two incidents outlined in the *forord* are there because they resemble so many others, but also because of their uniqueness.

In his essay 'DissemiNation', Bhabha challenges Bakhtin's description of the national 'vision of emergence', in which, says Bhabha, '[n]ational time becomes concrete and visible in the chronotope of the local, particular, graphic, from beginning to end' (1994: 143). This type of representation of the 'historical life' of a people is actually impossible to grasp or fix, he argues, because no *one* narrative can ever achieve representative authority in the telling of the national story. The national life is an ongoing reproductive process *performed* by the people, in dialogue with a pedagogical historiography. The seeming paradox of what we might call the 'ordinary uniqueness' of the incidents picked out by the narrator of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* oscillates throughout the novel and demonstrates that the collective dream is meaningless without the individual dream, and *vice versa*. In fact, the narrator comments explicitly on this, in the context of Anna's unusual over-protectiveness of her daughter, Maria:

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<sup>5</sup> This particular point in time is precisely half-way between the two world wars of the twentieth century, and this point-in-time also binds together the stories in Høeg's second work, *Fortællinger om*

‘At moderen, Anna, vil forhindre sit barn, Maria, i at gøre som alle andre, det gør Anna til noget særligt, ikke alene i hendes egen indbildning men også for os, det viser at hun ikke er som de andre, og måske vil nogen sige at hun slet ikke burde forekomme her fordi hendes liv og drømme ikke er typiske men særlige. Til det vil jeg sige at det eneste sted hvor gennemsnittet er repræsentativt det er i statistik, her derimod må jeg søge efter det der gør det almene *synligt*, og det er netop ofte det særlige’ (199: 142)

The crucial distinction here is perhaps best illustrated by the move from Bakhtin’s focus on, in Bhabha’s formulation, ‘the telling details that emerge as metaphors for national life’ to synecdoche.<sup>6</sup> By declaring itself an ‘udtømmende og enkelt’ history, and then proceeding to show the interdependence of the ordinary and the unusual, the everyday and the epochal, the individual and the collective, in the writing of a national narrative, the text requires the national model reader to compare and contrast the anticipated, rational, assimilated, *pedagogical* history with the messy, fragmented, surreal narrative here.

Significantly, though, the latter cannot be understood without the former. As the narrator in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* comments: ‘jeg bliver nødt til at advare mod dette “kort tid efter” fordi det minder mig om at tiden – *samtidig med at den skaber sammenhæng i et referat som dette* – virker så upålidelig, ikke mindst fordi den blev oplevet ganske anderledes da den fandt sted’ (Høeg 1999: 131, my emphasis). The postnational model reader must be familiar with the established context in order to grasp how it is challenged by deviation from the norm. To return to Bhabha, what the reader of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* is asked to

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natten (1990)

<sup>6</sup> Bhabha (1990: 294). This point is not brought out by Bhabha himself but by one of his critics, Mark Currie, who comments that when Bhabha writes of the ‘metaphoric movement’ of the nation-people, he

imagine is not ‘national time [...] from beginning to end’; it is the *complexity* of that national time. That is, the oscillation between the ‘continuist, accumulative’ time of the pedagogical, and the ‘repetitious, recursive’ time of the performative (1994: 145); the fractals of multiple, individual experiences of *lived* time.

### 2.3.3. *Koncentrat* as chronotope

The *forord* also flags the novel’s formal relationship with the spacetime of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The idea of *koncentrat* suggests that the century – time – can coalesce as some kind of matter which, perhaps, can be ‘scientifically’ studied. This is an idea left hanging in the air, but periodically alluded to. For example, the narrator worries that the idiom ‘to waste time’ is stranger than the idea of wasting the (equally precious) wartime coffee; for such a notion suggests that time is ‘stoflig’ – ‘og tiden vel ikke er et stof’ (Høeg 1999: 283). Mikhail Bakhtin seems to have worried about much the same thing. As is well-known, his notion of the artistic chronotope was not a neologism, but based on contemporary advances in Physics:

‘This term [space-time] is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity [...] What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space)[...] In the literary-artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, *thickens, takes on flesh*, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history’ (1981: 64, my emphasis)

Thomas Illum Hansen has analysed *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* on the basis of Bakhtin’s writings on the chronotope, and it should be noted here that Bakhtin’s comments are to be considered more as a backdrop to the present study,

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actually ought to write ‘metonymic movement’, since: ‘the relation of a modern national community to some single part is surely one of contiguity (synecdoche), not similarity.’ Currie (1998: 92-93).

rather than its theoretical basis. However, Illum Hansen does comment on one particular point of contact between *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, a point which is central to this study, and which cries out for a Bakhtinian treatment. Concluding his analysis of the novel in terms of its clash between chronology and chronotope, Illum Hansen comments: '[o]ptimalt skulle forestillingerne eftergøres samtidigt i ét nu, men læsningen og fortællingens udstrækning medfører nødvendigvis en vis rækkefølge. Høeg beskytter således sin tekst på samme måde som sigøjneren Melchiades i Márquez' *Hundrede års ensomhed*.' (Illum Hansen 1999: 201). Illum Hansen is referring to the final key to the parchments discovered by Aureliano in Márquez' text:

'The final protection [...] was based on the fact that Melquíades had not put events in the order of man's conventional time, but had concentrated a century of daily episodes in such a way that they coexisted in one instant.'  
(García Márquez 1970: 421)

The fascination common to both these novels, then, is the instant, the moment-in-time, the *øjeblik*, and its relationship to linear time and history. It will be remembered that Benedict Anderson emphasises the role of the novel in disseminating the notion of the national 'meanwhile', of the simultaneity of events across linear time; but the unreliability of chronology in these two novels makes the notion of 'meanwhile' somewhat frayed around the edges. In fact, it is the refusal to conform to the standard modern backdrop of 'homogeneous empty time' that makes these novels subversive; the temporal oscillations are part and parcel of the other derogations from so-called 'reality' which are usually categorised as 'magic realism'.

#### 2.3.4. Pre-figuring and fulfilment

Returning to the *forord* of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, we see that the momentary events mentioned there are described in spatial terms, just as the days in the passage above are described as being inside each other or piled on top of each other. So the *øjeblik* becomes less of a never-to-return point along a chronological line, and more of a multi-dimensional coalescence of the themes and patterns that mark these characters' lives. When Carsten stares down the barrel of that icon of modernity, the machine gun, it seems to point 'så befriende viljefast ud i en vag fremtid'; Anna is doing much the same thing peering through her microscope at the remaining germs in her home after her cleaning spree of several years, but, as her daughter points out, the germs continue to multiply ('der kommer altid mere skidt') (Høeg 1999: 7). The latter is echoed later in the novel by Anna herself, who, as a child, points out to her father, the priest Thorvald Bak, that his congregation's confessions of sin are pointless, because: 'bag hver synd findes der en ny [...] – det hører aldrig op.' (71). The never-ending cycle of dust and sin is reminiscent of that cyclical or 'natural' perception of time whose hold on human life was, ostensibly, weakened by the Industrial Revolution. Meanwhile, Carsten's gaze is directed towards a Capitalist future, the patriarchal (and Freudian?) implications of which are mischievously hinted at during Carsten and Maria's first sexual rendezvous: 'Maria ignorerede ham og lagde sine hænder om hans lem. Hun så opmærksomt på det, som om hun i dets hvide spænding kunne se noget om fremtiden' (298).

Both the incidents in the *forord* also have to do with sight, of course, which chimes with the literal meaning of *øjeblik* – blink of an eye. We can gaze down into the

microscopic depths of the moment, or out of the moment along a projected line. The *koncentrat* can be reconstituted and laid bare. We might go so far as to say that the return to the *øjeblik*, the moment in time, and the insistence on its worth as a representation – ‘et koncentrat’ – of the century, comes close to the conception of time not as linear, homogeneous and empty but as an ongoing ‘prefiguring and fulfilment’, which Anderson (1991: 24) attributes to the European medieval worldview, as discussed in chapter 1. Moments become linked thematically, not only because they happen simultaneously, or because the one precedes and causes the other, but because they mutually enhance their meaning as a concentrate of the century: they are ‘inde i hinanden’.

When the narrator of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* suggests that contained in the everyday is the essence of the experiences of the larger community over a century, this is redolent of the idea of prefiguring, the symbolic, the mythic. What we are presented with is a potted history of the twentieth century as the *stage* of the modern era, across which the themes of modernity unfold, with the narrator, perhaps, playing the role of Divine Providence – albeit a controlling power all too aware of his narrowness of vision. Indeed, it is the narrator who prevents the whole affair from spiralling into uncontrolled semiosis: Maria’s response to Anna’s cleaning frenzy could be linked thematically – by the relationship of prefiguring and fulfilment – to an unlimited number of events within and outside the text. But the narrator highlights a selected few: Anna’s observation that sin, like dirt, can never be eradicated (71), for example, or even Ole Rømer’s apocryphal (we must assume) friendly advice to the Count of Mørkhøj that ‘[[j]orden er rundt, og derfor har den centrum over det hele, og alt hvad man finder når man graver, det er lort’ (13).



Now, all this is not so different from the thematic networks to be found in any text, unless we take the narrator at his word: that the incidents he chooses to relate are selected because they contain a concentrate of the century. This is a different ordering principle from that usually adopted by historians, regardless of their precise theoretical allegiance: that history is grasped diachronically as well as synchronically, that is, although it may be impossible to determine a definitive ‘chain of events’, an implicit assumption of chronological progression forms the backdrop to narrative emplotment or good old-fashioned evolutionary progress. Holton sums up the bottom line of narrative historiography thus: ‘[w]hile the possibility of a non-teleological historiography might be considered, there is no doubt that much historical discourse contains a decidedly teleological aspect *and functions as a social means of temporal orientation*’ (1994: 40, my emphasis), or, as Mads would say, ‘det skaber sammenhæng i et referat’.

However, while *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* is ostensibly – formally – ordered teleologically, insofar as its ‘masterstory’ is the socio-economic progress of the twentieth century, the narrator/historian makes little attempt to select, order and explain the events he relates as constituents in a chain of cause and effect. Instead, the narrator’s selection and presentation of material is based on a lack of *rational* cause and effect. Although stories or events must be recounted, in text, with some degree of linearity, historical agency, in this novel, is based on coincidences, thematics, and concentrations of dreams. This becomes particularly clear in the account of Adonis Jensen’s conception. His father has stolen a flask full of ancient air from Mørkhøj, and when this air escapes from the flask, with its scent of the past and the sound of

long-ago music, the parents are inspired to make love. They do so in an elaborate bed produced for the latest Nordic exhibition of industry and art, in a house designed by their architect son Mehdahl. 'Denne situation er sammensat af elementer fra så mange forskellige steder, der er igen så mange drømme der her mødes [...] hvad der alt sammen peger på at forældrenes kærlighed og børnenes bedrifter på en eller anden måde hænger sammen' (96). What is at issue here is the coalescence of dreams and themes that prefigure – as opposed to effect – Adonis' eventual position as a husband poised on the boundary between poverty and enterprise in early twentieth century Copenhagen.

#### 2.3.5. **Mirrors and dreams: another time of writing**

Danow devotes a good deal of his book to the 'veritable compendium of possibility for chronicling the passage of time' offered by magic realism (1995: 146). He lists the various conceptions of time in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, as: 'capable of (carnavalesque) reversal [...]; as repetitive [...]; as circular [...]; as fragmented [...]; as translucent [...]; as coexistent', all varieties of time which are also in evidence in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*. As Danow points out, the last possibility – co-existence of moments – the one that is adopted as the guiding principle of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, is echoed by Isabel Allende in *The House of the Spirits* (1986): 'The past and the future formed part of a single unit, and the reality of the present was a kaleidoscope of jumbled mirrors where everything and anything could happen' (cited in Danow 1995: 146-7). This metaphor clearly conveys not only the multiplicity of lived moments and events in the time of the nation that might be recounted in a text, but also the myriad possibilities – angles, colours, patterns – for their representation. Each individually-experienced moment-in-time is only one

possible permutation of the raw stuff of history, only one possible coalescence of the cultural formations and social processes, which, in this text, appear as *dreams*. Does this answer Bhabha's call for a way of writing which, against linear, pedagogical historiography, 'give[s] the non-sequential energy of lived historical memory and subjectivity its appropriate narrative authority [...] another time of *writing* that will be able to inscribe the ambivalent and chiasmatic intersections of time and place that constitute the problematic 'modern' experience of the western nation'? (1994: 141)

#### **2.4. The location of knowledge**

The hi/stories of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* are temporally disjunctive, but they also tend to reveal disjunctions in space engendered by power differentials, and the historical dimensions of the landscape and cityscape. A range of sites in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* are the locations of the struggle for the control of history. They combine, to varying degrees, a place in the text, with a referent in the national reality; a fourth dimension to that reality in the form of a 'thickness' or 'depth' of history; and an association with 'real' historical characters. The question of who speaks, and where they speak from, is, in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, often deeply rooted in place and here, again, the idea of the archive can help us to grasp the strategies adopted in the text.

##### **2.4.1. The archive as motif**

The archive, says Echevarría, often appears as a motif in the text, and the undermining of conceptions of knowledge gains immediacy when the archive takes on spatial form. Melquíades' study in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the hub of the story, full of manuscripts, books, inventions, and the site of all attempts to decode the

parchments containing the history of the Buendía family. There are several such rooms in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*: the Old Lady (chapter 2) and Carl Laurids have their offices, the locations of which are unknown to anyone but themselves and their secretaries, while the ageing Christoffer Ludwig (chapters 2 and 6) lives out his dotage in a flat stuffed full of books, toys and paper animals in Dannebrogsgade. The Count of Mørkhøj's laboratory is the closest to Melquíades' study, both as regards its chronotopic, centripetal force for various events in the text, and as regards its sanitary facilities:

‘Enhver med uddannelse – og sådan var Greven – var dengang et stykke af en historiker og en læge og en filosof og en kemiker og en præst, og alt det var Greven, og derfor kunne han stort set selv bygge det store laboratorium med kolber og bøger og maskiner der forenede Paracelsus' lære om Den definitive Materie med Aristoteles' og Platons filosofi og den nyeste mekaniske velsmurthed, og det havde derudover indlagt vand og en spand til at skide i, og efter det var blevet færdigt blev Greven derinde blandt sine stjernekort og geometriske konstruktioner og kom kun sjældent ud.’ (Høeg 1999: 12)

This pre-Enlightenment scholar refuses the modern divisions between disciplines and the obsession with scientific verification and academic qualification. Any hubris is put down by the necessity of sharing this space of the mind with a bucket in the corner to serve the needs of the Count's nether regions. This study, a black hole of mysterious arcana, stands in counterpoint to the venerable stone-built institutions of learning in the novel, such as Sorø Akademi and Copenhagen University, where Danish history and the Law are learned by rote and knowledge is linear and manageable, given a good deal of hard work:

‘[Carstens] opførsel passede ualmindelig godt til Akademiets undervisning som var baseret på udenadslære af indiskutable sandheder[...] For ham var det på mange måder dybt tilfredsstillende at

komme til Sorø, hvor man brugte tiden på at lære eleverne om det der er fuldstændigt og aldeles stabilt og uforanderligt [...] at verden ikke var uoverskuelig og urimelig og kejtet og vanskelig som de troede, men tværtimod klar og sammenhængende og bæredygtig som Folkeånden selv, især hvis man som de tilhørte Blomsten af Danmarks Ungdom. (Høeg 1999: 271-3)

Sorø Akademi functions as the repository of stable, coherent Danish History in this novel: ‘over dette sted hviler historiens ånd’ (Høeg 1999: 265). The dreams that are gathered here, constructing the texture of the place, include that of Danish nature, the ‘blid og indsmigrende’ school landscape; and the *historical* depth of the environment, ‘den historiske grund med Absalons kirke og dens grave, de skønne eksempler på dansk bygningskunst lige ned til første halvdel af den 19. århundrede, de ærværdige gamle træer hvis alder for den barnlige fantasi bliver meget større end den virkelig er...’ (Høeg 1999: 266). More significant, though, is the historical continuity rooted in the school, the list of former pupils and teachers that reads like a who’s who of Danish cultural life stretching backwards in a line of unbroken continuity:

‘Men det som gør dette Akademi til noget ganske særligt, til noget fuldstændigt herligt og enestående og suverænt i Danmark, det er det indre liv, det er den ubrudte, åndelige kontinuitet fra Absalon over Christian den Fjerde og Frederik den Tredje og Holberg og Heise og Hauch og Ørsted og Ingemann til nutiden.’ (266)

The historical continuity that is the essence of this place is underlined by the visits of Vilhelm Andersen, biographer of Oehlenschläger and Ingemann, who assures the pupils that the world is ordered and manageable. Sorø, then, is the *anti-Archive* in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*; it represents the order that the narrator longs for. Significantly, however, like the Old Norse world-tree, Yggdrasil, the vision of destruction and chaos is already present at Sorø, the dragon gnawing at the solidity of its trunk. Carsten’s time at the school coincides with the Nazi Occupation of

Denmark, and one pupil takes to criticising government policy – and the Akademi’s policy of only teaching 19<sup>th</sup> century history – in an illegally-produced paper. When, on 10 April 1940, a few German soldiers take up position in Sorø torv, the Headmaster makes a speech announcing that a great test lies ahead, and requesting that the boys use toilet paper sparingly, as it would be rationed from now on. (1999: 272). At Sorø, the great events of history are juxtaposed with the minutiae of young boys’ lives. A party to celebrate Sankt Hans in the manner of Ingemann’s time is seen as a reconstruction of the values of that era, the sartorial spliced with the spiritual: ‘dengang der ikke var lommer i uniformerne og alle endnu følte Ånden fra 48 og værdierne var klare og tydelige og ikke som nu stadig mere flydende’ (276).

If Sorø stands problematically at the centre of Danish history, the edge of the national narrative is represented by Langelinie, where Anna and Adonis turn back from boarding the boat to America, and, accordingly, back into the parameters of Danish space and time.

‘Denne kaj er et vigtigt sted, det er drømmenes kaj, den er projekteret af Adonis’ bror Mehdahl, og den er tænkt som et billede på Danmark, på én gang venlig og storslået og prydet med monumenter der minder om fortiden, og bygget moderne og lang så den rækker ind i fremtiden.’ (118)

The mythological elements in the design of the quay are revealed here, just as Mørch (1996: 20-32, see Chapter 1) sees the 1960s’ notion of the future woven into the architecture of Odense Universitet. Again, the use of the notion of dreams to render a place as four-dimensional is in evidence. The place – Langelinie – has a referent in the ‘real’ Copenhagen, of course, just as the historical ‘event’ or ‘era’ it represents can be documented. If the quay is an ‘image of Denmark’, it is at the same time the site

where the story of Denmark exits, ceases to be Danish, where Danish citizens left for the wider world. It is also a site of dissipation of the forward momentum of modernity in the text; Anna's subsequent realisation that the tenement they move into is a 'ship' and the narrator's insistence that everyone in the tenement is moving towards all four corners of the globe at once disperses the forward movement of history into a movement in space. This is a trope which recurs throughout the novel: water stagnates events, makes forward progress impossible, right up to the Danish Prime Minister's assertion that Carsten's gift of a ship to the nation puts Denmark on course for the millennium – though the ship is only being launched into Sortedamssøen, and is thus not going anywhere much (332).

We must observe, though, that the spatial character of the archive is more than the textual sites that represent it metaphorically. It is the organising principle (although 'organising' is hardly an appropriate word) of the text, and of the spaces between and among individuals, institutions and discourses. Like black holes, these novels suck in Latin American or Danish history in its entirety and what is spewed out has first and foremost lost all sense of proportion. If institutional power determines the laws that are made, the sciences that are established, the histories that are told - who is telling and who is told - then the Archive, which refuses 'received knowledge and its ideological coagulations' allows unpredictable angles and points of view on the collected raw matter to come to the fore, and reverses and subverts the power relations that normally obtain in a society.

#### 2.4.2. Jarring witnesses

Clearly, this effect can have a purely æsthetic but also a political function; just as Westocentric scientific and cultural discourse ‘muted’ the cultural expressions of the Other through anthropological categorisation (e.g. the tenet that indigenous ‘myths’ are not finely-composed ‘literature’ in their own right but can be used to shed light on the origins of culture), so too have certain social groups (defined by gender, ethnic origin, etc.) been ‘muted’ in the sense that their world-view or definition of reality has not been granted the same validity as that of the dominant group. Such ‘jarring witnesses’ constitute the basis of Robert Holton’s study of modern fiction and the representation of history; social marginalisation is closely linked to narrative marginalisation in that ‘[l]iterature, particularly the novel, is one arena in which the cognitive and ethical limits that bound the *sensus communis* [socially established ‘common sense’] may be affirmed, tested, transgressed or attacked’ (1994: 46)

In *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, the *soi disant* dominant national narrative – the *Danmarkshistorie* epitomised by the spirit of Sorø – is obliged to jostle for supremacy with ‘jarring witnesses’ to Danish history such as women, children, ethnic minorities and other marginal social categories. Høeg has notoriously highlighted the plight of some Greenlandic immigrants in metropolitan Denmark in the best-selling novel *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (1992). The consequent temptation to read *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* reductively as a first stab at a socially radical novel, should, however, be resisted – and not *only* because the ‘jarring witnesses’ of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* are, almost without exception, indigenous Danes (though even this ethnicity is undermined along with the validity of the family’s genealogy, as will be discussed below). A brief survey of the social groups



‘told’ in the novel would be as follows. Each section of the novel centres on characters evocative of a particular social group. Firstly, the Danish nobility’s stagnant system is overthrown by the *borgerlig* class; the second chapter is the tale of a newspaper established by the daughter of a nightsoil man; the third is set in a fishing village so squalid as to be saved only by the most passionate pietistic priest and his idolised daughter; the fourth chapter centres on the thief and con artist Ramses Jensen. The second and third sections of the novel, containing two and one chapters respectively, chart the meetings and unions of the first four main characters and their children, and life in relative poverty and relative wealth, culminating in life under the Danish post-war welfare state in the final chapter.

Aside from the obvious scope for socially-defined categories of ‘jarring witnesses’ – all of them, nevertheless, Danish archetypes representing Danish dreams – there is a constant concern with the experience of the child, a concern which is also apparent in Høeg’s other novels. I make this last observation for two reasons. Firstly, the damaged child has become iconic in the critical reception of Høeg’s novels, to the point where the critic Erik Skyum-Nielsen (1995a & b; Larsmo 1995) based his review of Høeg’s novel *De måske egnede* (1993) on the notion that the novel itself was a form of abuse of the writer’s family. Secondly, and more importantly, the ultimate expression of disdain for rampant (or not so rampant) patriarchalism is to privilege not the woman’s point of view, but that of the child, whose lowly legal status has yet to be properly challenged in Western society.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> As I write these words, a debate is ongoing in Scotland as to whether the Parliament’s proposed ban on hitting children under the age of 12 months constitutes a violation of the *parent’s* right to discipline his or her child.

The array of characters is at first glance certainly socially diverse, but this is a panorama constitutive of any national whole, not necessarily deconstructive of the ‘essence’ of the nation. Thematically, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* concerns itself with characters that might be described as *randeksistenser*, a category often used to describe the narrative creations of another author in this study, Vibeke Grønfeldt. But this is insufficient. The formal structure of the novel immediately renders problematic the notion of ‘jarring witnesses’, for it balances uneasily between Bhabha’s ‘performative’ and ‘pedagogical’, between a radical re-drawing of the social (and ethnic) margins of the Danish nation and a parodically linear, ‘family tree’-type historiography.

#### **2.4.3. The narrator as ‘jarring witness’: unofficial and official hi/stories**

The question that niggles here is whether literary narrative can actually give muted groups a voice, and, if so, how? As Holton observes in his chapter on Joseph Conrad’s *Nostromo* (1904), it is one thing to critique the behaviour of the dominant group (in this case, European imperialists) from within, and quite another to include ‘a heterodox or heteroglossic element that could erode the legitimacy of that group’ (1994: 89), for example, to attribute some kind of interior life to the South American characters, or, by extension, the new subjects Jameson sees appearing in the Western mind’s eye after decolonisation. One is also reminded of *Dansk Litteraturhistorie*, published in the early 1980s, which includes one or two sections on women writers in each volume. In attempting to ensure the inclusion of women writers in the Danish canon, this work of criticism is effectively engaged in the construction of a system of literary apartheid. If history is merely to be re-written from the point of view of a repressed group (the mad, the female), then no challenge to the ‘wholeness’ of

history, or the possibility of understanding, has been made. In Currie's words: 'it is not enough to oppose the positivistic assumptions of history by writing a positivist history of the oppressed – it is the traditional practices of historical writing themselves which operate as ideological containment' (1998: 86).

How are we to escape from the strictures of historical tradition? The mere inclusion of a series of *randeksistenser* in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* does not constitute a challenge to the comforting certainties of a national history. But there is a sense in which the text itself is a 'jarring witness' to traditional historiography. Towards the end of the novel, Mads refers to an instability in Danish society that challenges centred and settled authority:

'De love og regler og systemer og mønstre som min slægt og alle andre i Danmark har overtrådt og rettet sig efter og skubbet til og vredet sig under i 200 år, de er nemlig nu i boblende opløsning' (Høeg 1999: 334)

This is Mads' explanation of why he feels a family history is necessary *now*; but it also betrays an awareness of the fact that social rules and systems are always 'i boblende opløsning' to some extent, for people have been breaking the rules and pushing the limits for (at least) 200 years. The *sensus communis* is constantly formed and re-formed by virtue of the fact that people have always transgressed as well as obeyed the rules. Danish dreams prove to be expressions of transgression as well as of conformity.

One might well describe this flux in the text as 'carnavalesque'; roughly, the periodic reversal by a society of fixed social or cultural roles or systems, transposed into

literature. And yet, Echevarría is at pains to point out a lack in Bakhtín's treatment of 'the official' in society:

'Bakhtín conceives of the official as something alien to society, as if officialdom were extra-terrestrial, imposed on humanity by some foreign invader. But what he calls official is as much a part of society as laughter and carnival; in fact, one could not exist without the other.' (1998: 9)

This leads to the realisation that *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* is as much about authority as it is about subversion. It challenges traditional historiography not by writing a positivist history of the oppressed, but by its openness to the interaction of different hi/stories, those of the powerful and those of the marginalised, and to the gaps in and between all of them. The contrast of, on the one hand, a differentiated yet fixed social order in Denmark, evolving slowly in the course of the twentieth century, and, on the other, the ceaseless and random wrestling with rules and dreams, is strongly reminiscent of Bhabha's pedagogical/performative 'double-time'.

One way in which the narrator leaves his history 'open' to different versions of reality, the official and the unofficial, is in his frequent ambivalent capitulation to non-realist descriptions of the events he is investigating – which nevertheless often comes close to the rational truth of the event. A good example is his justification of the inclusion of Maria's impression of her pregnancy in the 'official' record:

'Hendes svangerskab varede seks år, ja, I hørte rigtigt, seks år, og når jeg har sagt til Maria og Carsten, at det kan ikke passe, det er umuligt, det varer ni måneder, så har de sagt, at har du måske nogensinde selv været gravid, og selvom det ikke er noget svar, så har det mindet mig om at alt hvad det drejer sig om er, hvordan de oplevede graviditeten, og de takserer altså denne oplevelse til seks år.' (Høeg 1999: 309)

The problem is that the gaps and connections in history can only be filled or established using our own experience, and, all too often, this bears no relation to the official version of events. A woman's experience of being pregnant cannot be 'translated' into the interpretation of someone who has never been pregnant. Significantly, where documentary and objective historical analysis fails for the narrator, he turns to metaphor. For Anna, for example, the tenement in Christianshavn where the family lives is a ship:

‘Anna [mærkede] fra begyndelsen at de var flyttet ind i en slags Atlantis, og netop hendes indsigt kaster for mig nyt lys over slumkvarterenes undergangsverden som for eksempel dette hus, som jeg altid har troet var en lejekaserne [...] beboet af mennesker hvis liv var én lang konturløs gråvejrsdag, hvor det i virkeligheden forholder sig som Anna indså det, nemlig at hele dette samfund var på rejse [...] at de alle gik ud fra at deres hus, denne uflyttelige ejendom, når som helst kunne rive sig løs og sejle bort med dem over havet mod varmere og lykkeligere himmelstrøg.’  
(1999: 120)

Unfortunately for the tenants, Anna is the only one to notice that the building is not sailing into the sunset, but sinking into the mud. While it sinks, apparently over a period of some years, Anna's cleaning obsession develops, and she manages to keep her own apartment afloat. At the precise moment when she wins her battle against germs and dirt and achieves a completely clean home, the house slips the last few feet into the muck, and she disappears. This is an iconic image of magic realism, the ultimate in metaphor made literal. As so often in magic realist texts, 'the bright carnivalesque is seen to elide with the dark grotesque', as Danow (1995: 9) puts it.

What must concern us here is not just the narrator's acceptance of the 'historical fact' of the house sinking into the mud, but, equally, his declared *reluctance* to accept it. The coalescence of world-views presented by Danow as fundamental to the

prevalence of magical realism in the Latin American novel is pertinent here, for our narrator seems to be standing with one foot in either camp – which is precisely what the text as a whole seems to do:

‘That “magical dimension” is hypostatized in literature by the superimposition of one perceived reality upon another, as seemingly fantastic events that may nevertheless appear to the indigenous, heterogeneous peoples of the region as an indubitable norm are embedded within what outsiders perceive as distinct, exclusive, and the only “true” reality.’ (1995: 70)

The delicate balance required between credulousness and metahistorical critique – and indeed Biblical parable – is apparent in the narrator’s comment on the event:

‘[J]eg bliver nødt til stille og roligt at fortælle om de virkelige forhold som er at Adonis var rystet som jeg er den dag idag, over den gådefuld ulykke [...] et helt hus begynder ikke uden videre at synke ned i jorden, den slags skete bare i udlandet og som regel sydpå, for eksempel i Venedig [...] men Venedig var langt borte og den by var bygget på pæle og på sand, hvor Christianshavn hvilede på noget mere solidt, nemlig lort og affald fra Christian den Fjerdes tid.’ (1999: 137-8)

It will be recalled that, in the Latin American novel, as Echevarría claims, myth – be it talking birds or Western time itself – is taken literally with the purpose of subverting its status as object of enquiry for the foreign (or indeed indigenous) ethnographer: myth and history coalesce as equally viable. Similarly, the magical realist effect in this passage is dependent on the postnational model reader’s assumed grasp of the ‘reliable’ facts of Danish history *as well as* her/his doubts about their reliability. What seems to be a simple case of metaphor becoming literal – a sinking tenement representing the slow slide into poverty during the Depression – suddenly becomes almost feasible when the reader is reminded that King Christian IV’s programme of public building also must have entailed a great deal of excavations and

the disposal of waste. Cities always have trouble with rubbish, and many are built on refuse tips, including London, as Peter Ackroyd's *London: The Biography* (2000: 339) convincingly shows. Furthermore, digging into the foundations of a city reveals a physical palimpsest of its history: the days, quite literally, piled on top of each other. The mention of Venice also renders the story more viable, since it is well-documented that the Italian city is indeed sinking. One 'indubitable norm' meets another. And so the glories of Christian IV's reign are undermined along with the insular assumption that that sort of thing only happens 'south of Denmark'.

By giving subjective experience free reign, the 'historian' or story-teller liberates the story from the strictures of rationality, such as the objectively measured passage of time and the behaviour of buildings. In *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, the narrator himself is the 'jarring witness' to history. But the narrator here is not only a jarring witness in the sense that he rejects the primacy of historical objectivity, attributes the quality of reliability to subjective impressions, urban legend, gossip and memory, and foregrounds the utter hopelessness of his attempt to gather, control and interpret his sources. By writing himself into the narrative, revealing himself as an 'insider', a 'fictional' character in his own declared 'non-fictional' account of dreams, he also pokes fun at the hapless ethnographer or historian who is always necessarily either inside or outside the society s/he is narrating. In this way, Tobin's comment on the unfettered plenitude of experience in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* could also be applied to *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*:

'Absent from this novel are the articles of faith that stand prior to all historical and scientific pursuits of knowledge such as cause and effect, the overall totality of order, the movement from the particular to the

abstract. The facticity and presence of a conglomerate of things, equally coexistent, are sufficient in themselves.’ (1978: 168)

*Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* is a history of a ‘conglomerate of things’, and its archival dis-ordering of them in time and space – its disjunctive hi/stories – dissolves the national metanarrative with a decentred, fragmented dream-logic which, nevertheless, as the archive suggests, is irresistibly drawn to the crystallisation of its own ‘masterstory’. It is this longing for order, the ‘længslen efter orden’ to which the narrator admits, to which we now turn.

### **3. The longing for order**

The title of this section faintly echoes that of Timothy Brennan’s essay, ‘The National Longing for Form’ (1990). Brennan’s concern is to trace the longing of nations for representation in various artistic ‘forms’ – celluloid, plastic, paper – that will do justice to ‘the concrete acts these “forms” resemble but cannot replace’ (Brennan 1990: 67). While this is also an underlying concern of the present study, my title in this case is taken from the final episode of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, which deals with the ‘længslen efter orden’ that the Welfare State attempted to fulfil. Indeed, the Welfare State as an ideology can be seen to be founded on many of the principles associated with a rational, historical *telos*, such as industrial modernisation, economic growth, and a belief in rational-scientific solutions to social problems (Christiansen & Petersen 2001: 26). The political consensus-building on which the Welfare State was based is, however, aside from being a salient feature of the political branch of Danish *nationalfølelse*, perhaps a very apt analogy for the thrashing out of an agreed national identity over time.



### 3.1. Genesis and genealogy

One focus of the national longing for order is an ‘event’ that cannot be remembered but only reconstructed in the mists of time: the origin of the nation. Though constructivist accounts of nation-building locate the origin of nations with the coming of print-capitalism and industry, the affective community imagines its origins as being much further back in time. This is also the crux of Gellner’s argument that nations do not have navels, because they were created, ‘not in a week, but in a couple of centuries or so’, and the evolutionary characteristics they display (their ‘navels’) – their ‘immemorial antiquity’ – are illusory (Gellner 1998: 92-3).

The origin of the nation is not only to be sought at the beginning of chronological time, as discussed in 2.2.2 above; the Origin is also excavated in the context of the Danish tribe at the centre of the chronicle, whose genealogy can be traced no further back than Carl Laurids, born in the primeval soup of inbreeding at Mørkhøj:

‘Carl Laurids blev født en nytårsnat på Mørkhøj - det har været umuligt at finde ud af hvem der var hans forældre [...] Efter de flestes mening var det år 1900 Carl Laurids fødes, nytårsnat 1900.’ (Høeg 1999: 11)

Not only is Carl Laurids a foundling, but the rather grand name he bequeaths to the family line - Mahogni - is unilaterally adopted by him at the age of nineteen (162). So the founding father of the tribe, the paternal grandfather of the current generation, gives the lie not only to the patriarchal naming system but also to the possibility of genealogical tracing, since he was born to a nameless mother in a timeless town. The matriarch of Amalie’s family in Rudkøbing has equally murky origins:

‘ingen huskede andet end at Amalie’s bedstemor, om hvem det fortæltes at hendes far havde været renovationsarbejder og natmand og altså levede af at køre lort bort, altid havde været avisens redaktør.’ (29)

Significantly, Den gamle Dame’s husband, Amalie’s grandfather, began to blur round the edges after his marriage and eventually becomes entirely invisible, except in photographs, where he can be glimpsed as a cloud of powder faintly glowing in the light from the flash (29). Amalie’s father, Christoffer Ludwig, also suffers from ‘udvaskede’ contours (33), but never disappears entirely (though he spends his last years as a hermit in his book-filled study).

Anna Bak, meanwhile, is born in Lavnæs, the fishing village whose inhabitants have bowed to the batterings of weather, poverty and acts of God and have reverted to the most atavistic of social practices: ‘[v]i æder vores eget lort’ (62). But the destitution of the village proves the ideal breeding ground for evangelical Christianity of the *Indre Mission* variety, and Anna is identified as the pre-destined mother of the new Messiah, who will make a new Bethlehem of Lavnæs. A virgin birth would in itself pose a challenge to accepted standards of human genealogy, but, in the event, the conception of her child is less than immaculate – though hardly conventional. Anna is in two places at once: she can ‘fordobles’, glowing gently by her father’s side as he preaches to the sinners of Rudkøbing, and, simultaneously, assisting the soon-to-be father of her child in his duties as ‘wave-boy’ on the set of *Around the World in Eighty Days* (75-6). Moreover, the foretold ‘saviour’ of Lavnæs is born as a girl – Maria – the Word made female flesh, whose father is later revealed to be Adonis Jensen.

Adonis Jensen is the one character in this turn-of-the-century generation who can trace a direct, if somewhat apocryphal, line back through his forefathers. He is the son of Ramses, who in turn is the reluctant heir to his father Cæsar Jensen's criminal reputation. The discussion of this family is interesting, not only because it is, perversely, their status as petty criminals that makes them national (anti-)heroes, but also because the construction of the Jensen reputation as literary romantic myth is dissected:

‘Det var umuligt for Ramses, ligesom det er håbløst for os, at finde sandheden bag de vilde pralerier med hvilke Cæsar Jensen omgav sin slægts historie, der [...] syntes lånt fra billige tryk af verdenshistoriens store forbryderskikkelser. [...] Sandheden for resten af verden var at Cæsar Jensen var romantikkens drøm om en forbryder, at i hans skikkelse kulminerede en slægt af storslåede lovovertredere[...] selv realregistrene til de i landet afsagte kriminaldomme hyldede Cæsar Jensen som en tyvagtig og teatralisk Messias’ (81)

Ramses and his wife, Princessen, the daughter of a circus quick-change artist and ‘maskekunstner’, have eleven sons and one daughter, and the runt of the litter is Adonis, who later fathers Anna's daughter. He is born when his mother must be several decades past child-bearing age. The numerous children of Ramses and Princessen grow up, with the exception of Adonis, to be pillars of Danish society, famous, historically verifiable, men and women (including Ferdinand Mehl Dahl and H.N. Andersen) whose driving ambition, thanks to their childhood on the run, is ‘at sætte det tungeste af alt, nemlig samfundet, i bevægelse’ (93). The success of Ramses' children, their integration into society, and, indeed, their dynamic influence on civilisation, is a source of disappointment and shame for him; Adonis himself proves to be worse than all the others, for he counteracts his father's considerable burglarious

skills on moral grounds, leading Ramses to ruminate sadly on how his children have betrayed their heritage:

‘[Ramses] mindedes den fortid hvori han havde forsørget en familie og et antal børn så stort at han ikke lige kendte tallet, og som alle havde svigtet ham ved at blive betydningsfulde og umådeholdne mænd med fremmede navne og overdrevne ønsker om at forandre verden, og havde efterladt ham og Princessen, hans livs engel, til sig selv og det spinkle håb, som nu definitivt og for Gud ved hvilken gang var bristet, nu hvor Adonis igen havde misbrugt sig selv og rettet et slag mod sin far.’ (98)

The family of Adonis’ mother, known as the Princess, are also worth mentioning here, for, insofar as she is ‘un-Danish’, the purity of the Danish blood running in the veins of her – and therefore Denmark’s – most famous sons and daughters is also diluted. The novel, in fact, deconstructs the circus people’s ‘performance’ of their own ethnic identity, providing one of the keys to the novel’s construction of the identity of its characters. The circus culminates in a pantomime, where

‘[...] alle de optrædende klædte sig ud og sminkede sig med cacao og med sod udrørt i fedt *for at komme til at ligne danskernes forestilling om de sydeuropæere, de faktisk var*, og i denne handling lå en fin viden om at hverken i manegen eller for den slags skyld i dette referat af virkelig begivenheder optræder længslerne helt renskurede og naturlige.’ (89, my emphasis)

In this simulacrum of South European ethnicity, the origins of the Mahogni family dissolve into the mid-eighteenth century Danish dream of the Other in the form of the circus: ‘Det Eksotiske og Det Erotiske og Friheden og Paradiset’(87). This is an analogy, the narrator admits, of the inevitable self-reflexiveness of his own report. And the same applies to the origins of all four founding characters, Carl Laurids, Amalie, Anna and Adonis: the lines of succession are either shrouded in mystery, smeared in muck, or covered in the romantic glory of criminality or the circus.

### 3.2. Textual perversities

The concept of genealogy itself brings to mind Kierkegaard's remark that life can only be understood backwards, but must be lived forwards; a family tree, traced and understood backwards, seems to provide an ordered, linear account of births, marriages and deaths, culminating purposefully in the production of the present generation. Lived forwards, though, a family 'line' is an ongoing process of random individuals meeting and procreating, often outwith the boundaries of marriage. The certainty of genetic continuity is symbolised, but not guaranteed, by the patriarchal naming system; and how appropriate that the *adopted* family name of this 'tree' – Mahogni – should be a precious type of wood! In the case of this family, the legal and genetic discontinuities and, indeed, impossibilities are legion.

The idea of genetic continuity, of knowable origins, is also subverted by the various 'impossibilities' associated with conception and birth in the novel, and with non-standard sexual proclivities. Amalie is born to a mother dying of consumption and an 'automat' (42) of a father whose contribution to the conception consists of following the voice of his dead mother to his wife's bedroom. The advanced age of Adonis' parents has already been mentioned. More subversive are the circumstances of Anna Bak's pregnancy; since Anna is visible to all in Church at the exact moment of conception – which itself takes place backstage at Rudkøbing theatre – the villagers' belief in a virgin birth has, and yet has not, been fulfilled. The demands of both religious myth and rational history are satisfied. That the promised Messiah turns out to be a baby girl named, of all things, *Maria*, throws into reverse two thousand years of Christian dogma. And when Carl Laurids, exceptionally, attempts to seduce Amalie

in a conventional way, his failure is ironically described as surprising, since the blessing of the Dannebrog should have been fluttering over the act. He finds himself quite impotent, even though '[d]atoen er den 15. juni, den dag hvor Dannebrog for circa 700 år siden faldt ned fra himlen og intet burde kunne gå galt' (186).

The second and third generations of Mahognis are no less miraculous than the first. Having been conceived while her mother, Anna, was in two places at once, Maria Jensen's own pregnancy lasts six years (during which time a rather unhealthy fifteen or twenty x-rays are taken), resulting in the twins, Mads and Madelene. Of Madelene it is said: 'Madelene [var] ikke mørk men sort, og Maria kunne se hun lignede Prinsessen som snydt ud af næsen' (324). Mads, on the other hand, is pale-skinned and -haired, and in the spirit of the genetic compromise the twins represent, the family also agrees on the pair of names which match so well phonetically but pair the exotic (Madelene) with *pæredansk* tradition (Mads). These twins are the personification of the 'pendulbevægelser' that dominate their childhood (324), as their parents swing between madness and sanity, homely *hygge* and incarceration in sanatoria; and in the twins can be seen the culmination of the genes and dreams passed through the generations in the novel. As in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, genealogy reveals its double nature: patterns of behaviour repeat themselves even as the line of succession continues.

Maria's husband, Carsten, who is the son of Amalie and Carl Laurids, seems to emerge unscathed from an incestuous affair with his own mother. This incident echoes the incest at the end of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* which heralds the last of the line – a child with a pig's tail – and apocalypse. The sense of spiralling sexual

and moral decadence is also evident in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*; Amalie has been reduced to working as a high-class prostitute to make ends meet, and in fact she and Carsten have been moving towards this moment for years: 'igennem mange år har de udforsket grænserne i forholdet mellem mor og søn og de er kommet til at kende dem så godt at ingen bremses bliver slået i nu da de overskrider dem' (244-5). In Carsten and Amalie's case, the only obvious outcome is a minor car crash as the two lovers elope, which brings Amalie back to her senses (244-6).<sup>8</sup> In any case, the degenerative consequences of in-breeding, for cattle and for humans, in Mørkhøj have already been sketched in technicolour in *Første Del*. How appropriate, then, that Madelene, the last of the line, should herself end up sharing her life with a cow, having thoroughly researched her own sexuality and 'lysten i nuet' (331). With momentary gratification as her only principle, is she not living out a version of the narrator's insistence that the multi-faceted moment is all?

And what of Mads, the persona suddenly adopted or revealed by the narrator on the last page of the novel? The relationship between incest and self-reflexivity in literature is a close one. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* makes explicit the resemblance of Melquíades' parchments - which look like human skin - and the dry and bloated skin of the last of the line, the child with a pig's tail, as Echevarría (1998: 27-8) points out:

'The monster and the manuscript, the monster and the text, are the product of the turning in on oneself implicit in incest and self-reflexivity. Both are heterogeneous within a given set of characteristics, the most conspicuous of which is their supplementarity: the pig's tail, which exceeds the normal contours of the human body, and the text, whose mode of being is each added reading and interpretation.'

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<sup>8</sup> However, there may be a degree of intertextuality with *Macondo's* pig-like 'last of the line' earlier in the novel, when Amalie is said to 'grunt like a pig' during sex.

We have established that *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* is self-reflexive not only in the anthropological sense but also in a metafictional sense. If Madelene is Mads' dark twin, then the revelation that he is not only the narrator but also the last of the Mahogni line – and therefore has suspended himself, like the rest of them, in the foggy no-man's-land between history and fiction – reveals the ethnographic act for the impossible double-bind it is. In Høeg's later novel, *Frøken Smilla's fornemmelse for sne*, the narrator tells us: 'Det øjeblik man begriber det fremmede, mister man trangen til at forklare det. At forklare et fænomen er at fjerne sig fra det' (Høeg 1992: 184). Smilla is an expert in living between two cultures; in the case of Mads, living between the factual and the fictional is what allows him to explain, albeit in a fragmented and subjective fashion.

### **3.3. Scatology and eschatology**

Genealogy thus becomes less a matter of, literally, 'lineage' and more a matter of the natural cycles alluded to in the *forord*. Appropriately, in the course of the novel, various characters (and buildings) sink – in best magic realist style – into the murky depths of decomposing organic matter and mud, just as the Roman Catholic rite reminds us on Ash Wednesday: 'remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.' Scatology is a significant strategy of subversion in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*; it turns out that national identity, as well as the potential for its mortification, is rooted in the body.

Ole Rømer's piece of advice to the Count of Mørkhøj, cited earlier, also holds true for the spacetime of this text: 'den [har] centrum over det hele, og alt hvad man finder når



man graver, det er lort' (Høeg 1999: 13). The history of human civilisation is only a vain battle to build on muck, like the tenements of Christianshavn; to clean away all trace of the organic matter our bodies – and the stars themselves – are made from. Anna's compulsive cleaning is all in vain, because 'det hj-hj-hjælper ikke, for der kommer altid mere skidt' (7). Many of the chronotopic, mythical, kaleidoscopic moments of *koncentrat* selected and unpacked by the narrator become topoi of 'pre-time', of swamps, smells, darknesses, a network of de-centred centres of the essence of the twentieth century.

Bakhtin recognises the potential of scatology for Rabelais' subversive picture of the world:

'the defecation series creates the most unexpected matrices of objects, phenomena and ideas, which are destructive of hierarchy and materialize the picture of the world and of life' (1981: 187)

While this is part of Rabelais' strategy of overturning the hierarchical structure of society, the density of references to eating, drunkenness, sex and defecation in his writings is, Bakhtin argues, also aimed at embodying the world, tying time and space in to the human body and thus wresting corporeality free of the chains of the medieval scholastics (177). There is no more effectively equalising thought than that we are all, rich and poor, great and humble, slaves to our own materiality.

In this respect, Milan Kundera tells us that 'the objection to shit is a metaphysical one. The daily defecation session is proof of the unacceptability of Creation [...] Kitsch is the absolute denial of shit' (Kundera 1984:241). Toilets abound in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*. The Teanders consider themselves local royalty, deigning to

throw open their mansion to tour-parties (in much the same way as medieval nobles would set aside carnival days for the peasants). The chapter opens with one such open-day, when the public is invited to view the house's latest acquisition. Decorated with a pattern of red flower petals, boasting lion-claw feet, and mounted on a platform of white Persian marble, the town's first water-closet proves to be quite a tourist attraction: 'på det tidspunkt måske Danmarks fineste omgivelser at skide i, bestilt og betalt af Den gamle Dame, der i sin ungdom havde gravet og solgt tørv og levet på et husmandssted der var som en mødding' (Høeg 1999: 31). The ancestral cow-shed aroma still hovers around the mansion, never quite dispelled by the maids' best efforts with brown soap and dried violets (Høeg 1999: 43). Such is the kitsch of the *nouveaux riches* – the dream of affluence subverted by effluence.

The old order in Denmark, represented by the Count of Mørkhøj, have to make do with a bucket to serve the needs of the nether regions – and the Count's bucket is positioned in his study, the same space where his mind soars into the celestial heights of science handed down to him by Ole Rømer and the Great Paracelsus (Høeg 1999: 12). By the time the text reaches the Danish upper classes of the 1920s, architecture, the concrete expression of the dream of an ordered life, has made sure that the doors are kept closed on 'alt det der har at gøre med madlavningen og afføringen og hygiejnen og tjenestefolkene og rengøringen' (196); in this time and place, the functions of the servants have the same status as bodily functions. Order and civilisation require forgetting and invisibility, the painting of roses on the toilet bowl; only a carnivalesque rejection of the strictures of industrial time or bourgeois reserve can reveal the hidden recycling processes fundamental to human life.

No cycle is more cyclical than the atavistic practice of the residents of Lavnæs, a fishing village in the third chapter of the novel. So numbed are they by poverty and the relentless freak weather that has turned the area into a sea of muck that the people survive, they say, only because ‘vi æder vores eget lort’ (62). It takes a pig-headed evangelical priest with the *Indre Mission* to purify the village of sin – and the smell of rotting fish hanging over Lavnæs seems to be eradicated by the same purifying fire. Anna, the pastor’s daughter, escapes to Copenhagen, leaving the villagers only with the fossilised pieces of her excrement they had stolen and preserved as holy relics (69). She had never understood her father’s dream of cleansing his flock, evoking a self-begetting cycle of sin: ‘[m]en bag hver synd findes der en ny [...] det hører aldrig op’ (71).

This is the moment of truth which Anna’s daughter, Maria, will later fulfil when she reminds her obsessive mother that dirt, like sin, multiplies faster than it can be eradicated, as Anna desperately tries to hold her home and family hovering ‘som en overjordisk ren kugle’ (139) while all around her sinks into the prehensile mud of Christianshavn. In this connection it is worth remembering that one of the dreams of the 1950s, the golden age of the Welfare State, was the rationalisation, or mechanisation, of cleanliness (Mørch 1996: 423). In his analysis of the mythologies of advertising, Barthes makes the connection between cleanliness, godliness and public order in the imagination:

‘Products based on chlorine and ammonia are without doubt the representatives of a kind of absolute fire, a saviour but a blind one. Powders, on the contrary, are selective, they push, they drive dirt through the texture of the object, their function is keeping public order not making war’ (Barthes 1972: 36)

Given the disintegration of order as the text nears its end, as we shall discuss below, the topology and tropology of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* turn on the myth of eternal return to pre-time, absolute time, time before time, or what the poet Norman MacCaig calls ‘the slime of everything’.<sup>9</sup> Historical progress, linear time, social order and homogeneity, and the conceit of rationality; all these are de-doxified by decomposition and defecation. Or rather: modern history is presented as a grand narrative of escape from the very matter that makes us human. The genesis of Danish order out of amorphous chaos.

### 3.4. The longing for *ordet*: or, the myth of writing

It has already been suggested that Echevarría’s archive often turns up in ‘semiotic’ form in the archival novel. The sites where the archive is troped metaphorically often have to do with language and writing, kicking against their ‘truth-bearing’ document which, self-reflexively, is the novel itself. Collecting, displaying, *disordering* even as it orders – for to sort an accumulation of things is always to tell one story, not the other stories – the archive is the jumbled storehouse of the literary. Towards the end of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, Amalie visits her father’s flat:

‘Døren til lejligheden var ikke låst, men entréen var næsten spærret af bøger. De var overalt i lejligheden, i tusindvis af bind stablet fra gulv til loft, og det meget papir havde drænet luften for væde så den var knitrende tør og sved i halsen [...] Christoffer Ludwig sad ved det runde bord, på samme sted og i samme stilling some dengang for mange år siden da Amalie havde opsøgt ham [...] Det var tydeligt at han var forladt, omgivet af bøger der fortalte at kærligheden var evigt, og af smuldrende genstande fra hans tilværelse some de gulnede papirsdyr og blanketterne der aldrig var blevet trykt færdigt, og små stykker legetøj’ (Høeg 1999: 243)

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<sup>9</sup> In the poem ‘Basking Shark’ (1969), the poet’s meeting with a shark prompts him to imagine himself as a product of evolutionary processes, ‘emerging from the slime of everything’ (MacCaig 1993: 219-20)

When, many years later, Christoffer Ludwig's grandson's wife tries to find him, the piles of books have grown to create an impenetrable wall, and his fate is unknown. While such study-rooms are indeed the home of 'the covenant of writing' and of science, what issues from them is either humbug (the Count's conviction that Mørkhøj stands at the centre of the world) or uncontrolled semiosis (Christoffer's life-long compulsion to make endless chains of paper animals - a sisyphian task that echoes Colonel Aureliano Buendía's forging and melting down of little golden fish in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*).

In a similar way, the text of the Old Lady's newspapers is also problematically unstable (Høeg 1999: 49-56). The relationship of the printed word to reality has always been out of time; people buy this newspaper because it contains her unflinchingly accurate predictions of births, deaths, suicides and crime. Even after her apparent death, her Last Will and Testament contains a blow-by-blow account of local events and, even, the future conduct of the coming First World War. But her son's and granddaughter's break with her temporal authority – speaking out of turn – is enough to throw the 'fourth dimension' of Rudkøbing and its environs out of kilter. When the text of the next day's newspaper fails to predict local events, instead reflecting the news of a previous age, local events themselves start to spiral out of any temporal context: 'tiden tilsyneladende mistede sin betydning' (50), and chaos ensues. Again we witness an uncontrollable build-up of paper, the new printing-presses brought from Copenhagen producing a news-sheet full of nonsense-rhymes and Christoffer's childish drawings, that the printers work through an endless night to produce and which is turned to slime by the melting snow when the 'tidskaos' finally ends. The perceived task of historical narrative – to represent 'reality' – is thus reversed: the

newspaper's textual representation of events is revealed as the origin of reality. When the content of the newspaper/text is void of any meaning ('mister sin betydning') or foundation in reality, the scene seems to fade to white; literally, in this case, as the huge snowflakes, with a phrase reminiscent of the behaviour of historical time in this novel, 'stablede sig oven på hinanden lag på lag' (55). '[S]neen var et varsel om slutningen': the text fades to white.<sup>10</sup>

This is the power of the (much-disputed) literary practice of magic realism, in which the fantastic and the impossible is reported with the same more or less 'objective' tone of credulousness as is what might dubiously be described as the 'real' or the 'possible'. Again, this privileging of literary language is tied up with the refusal to comply with established Enlightenment categories of knowledge; in text, anything is possible, anything can be represented. This joyful approach to text goes against the grain of the West's use of writing as authority, about which, as discussed, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* is dubious. The archive is thus emblematic of the very idea of textuality, or the category of the literary. Both fiction and ethnography are text-bound, dependent on, and accepting of, in Echevarría's words, 'the literariness of all representations of the Other'.

Language is also at issue in the sites and institutions of learning in the novel, such as Sorø Akademi and Copenhagen University, where Danish history and the Law are learned by rote and knowledge is unisemic and manageable, given a good deal of hard work, as Carsten's behaviour suggests:

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<sup>10</sup> Peter Høeg's *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* actually ends with a snow white-out, which has inspired a similar interpretation: instead of the sense of an ending, there is only a fading out of the text along with the scene it represents. See, for example, Norseng's comment (1997: 54): 'returning all, we might say, to the blank page'.

[Carstens] opførelse passede ualmindelig godt til Akademiets undervisning som var baseret på udenadslære af indiskutable sandheder, for hvilke bøjningen af de latinske verber – som Gudskelov ikke kan ændre sig fordi dette sprog for længst er afgang ved døden – var forbilledede, et forbilledede man forsøgte at anvende overalt, overalt og ikke mindst i danskundervisningen” (Høeg 1999: 271)

The use of *language* (Latin) here is, of course, not insignificant. The apparently stable patterns of verb conjugation are immediately rendered unstable as soon as living language (Danish) is put into use, whereas a dead language (Latin) serves no function except as an exercise in rote learning; an attainable but ultimately empty form of knowledge.

There is another problem with the Origin that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* seem to flag; not so much the myth of the temporal origin of the teleological history of the nation in the ‘valley-without-time’, but one which has more to do with writing and speech, and authority. *Logos* – the authoritative word – is the fundament of entire systems of belief. The whole project of the Count of Mørkhøj is eventually, and in passing, unveiled as based on a fundamental misinterpretation. The Count had, as a youth, discovered that the great scientist Paracelsus had once visited Mørkhøj and declared that the centre of the Earth lay somewhere on the estate. That Paracelsus’ words – ‘dette her må sgu være verdens midte’ (25) – were uttered after a long session in the Mørkhøj cellars with some prostitutes and much alcohol demonstrates the dependence of meaning on context and authority. A more subtle example of the same danger of overinterpretation is recounted during Carsten’s time at Sorø Akademi, the island of Danish History. A rote answer in the *studentereksam* rests on an isolated line from one of Grundtvig’s

songs: 'hvis få har for meget og færre for lidt' is to be interpreted as the national prophet's promulgation of 'et nationaløkonomisk program af vidtrækkende betydning' (Høeg 1999: 271).<sup>11</sup> The meaning of words is unstable, and the authority deriving from them even more so.

The Western tradition has tended to treat writing as, on the one hand, more reliable than the spoken word, being more fixed – in stone, or on paper. On the other hand, writing is also instinctively considered to come after speech, in human historical development; as something 'supplementary'. For Benedict Anderson, a consciousness of national belonging cannot begin until, as Bhabha phrases it, 'the notion of the "arbitrariness of the sign" fissures the sacral ontology of the medieval world and its overwhelming visual and aural imaginary' (Bhabha 1994: 157). This is not just a matter of the necessity of print capitalism for the dissemination of the nation-forming novel; it is tied up with the modern separation of the sign and the thing it refers to, which, in the case of the nation, is far too complex for any discourse to represent. Jacques Derrida, criticising the anthropologist Lévi-Strauss' ethnocentric presentation of writing as an invention of modernity imposed upon the 'noble savage' from outside, argues that 'writing' is a more basic and abstract phenomenon. 'Writing', in Derrida's sense, is anterior even to language, and consists in the 'violence' of naming and categorisation (Johnson 1997: 37). Through the linguistic 'joke' of *différance* – meaning is always deferred as well as differing – Derrida insists on the inherent instability of any language, written language included, a quality which is manifested most satisfyingly in the process of translation, which reveals the slipperiness of 'original' meaning.

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<sup>11</sup> An interpretation very close to Østergård's extraordinary emphasis on Grundtvig's writings as the foundation of the national discourse (1992: 82-3)



While the authority of written text is a central concern in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*'s foundational texts – the history of Mørkhøj – and documentary evidence – the authorities' files on Maria – it is interesting to consider that many of the characters are in fact illiterate. The Old Lady, prescient newspaper proprietor, never learns to read or write (Høeg 1999: 29); Ramses Jensen fails to understand that his exotic surroundings are the paraphernalia of the circus, because he cannot read the sign saying 'Kunstforestilling' (87); and of course the Count of Mørkhøj's children fail to master the art of reading, writing, or even speaking properly, despite 200 years of schooling (20). On the other hand, the limitations of the historical 'clues' provided by written documents are made clear by the piles of official papers that can be 'laid on the desk' relating to Maria's career as a delinquent; they tell the narrator much less than the photograph of the children he finds (144-7). The power of written testimony – words literally 'carved in stone' – is deconstructed by Cæsar Jensen's confession: he carves his wildly exaggerated list of crimes into his cell walls, which are later taken down and used as evidence at his trial, as well as the foundation of the romantic legend of his exploits (80-1).

One of the 'archives' or studies in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* is the source of a foundational text in the same way that Melquíades begets the history of the Buendía clan in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: the Count of Mørkhøj's laboratory. In the latter case, the story begins along with language: 'the world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point' (García Márquez 1970: 1). In the former case, in-breeding has resulted in a loss of the power of speech. What initiates time is writing: the commitment to paper

of events which reveal to Carl Laurids the concept of change over time. It will be remembered that this laboratory is the setting for Carl Laurids' marathon reading session, while the Count dies a slow paralysing death. This is an ironic twist, for that same laboratory had been dedicated to the pursuit of proof that 'Mørkhøj var et centrum i en verden uden tid' (Høeg 1999: 24). History is thus begotten by text, and is only text. Like the metafictional moebius strip of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the History of Danish Dreams encapsulates its own finality, and constitutes the very text it denies is possible.

**After/word: Ordering the archive: the longing for space**

The narrative – Mads' *forestilling* – spirals into a colossal final chapter, a culmination of four generations of history, spanning the fifty years from the end of the second World War to 1989. This is also the section where the physical inadequacies of the two dimensions of writing on paper become clear to him. History, like the text, lacks order, and words – the text – are not an adequate medium to *create* order from chaos. The Scottish novelist Alasdair Gray once remarked that the perfect mural of Scottish society would have to be created on a scale of 1:1: a perfect map, in other words, is a perfect simulacrum of the thing it represents (Gray 2001). Jorge Luis Borges' short text 'The Library of Babel' (*Labyrinths*, 1970) conceives of the universe as an infinite Library, 'unlimited and cyclical' in form (85), housing every possible text in every possible language. A footnote to the text postulates that that the Library is 'unnecessary', and that 'a single volume [...] containing an infinite number of infinitely thin leaves' would be sufficient to represent the universe; however, '[t]he handling of this silky *vade mecum* would not be convenient: each apparent page

would unfold into other analogous ones; the inconceivable middle page would have no reverse' (86).

For Mads, the problem of the limitations of the two dimensions of text comes to a head at the birth of the twins, Mads and Madelene:

'Tilstede ved tvillingernes vugge er altså de fattiges og de riges og middelstandens og de allernederstes forventninger, og der er forventninger der peger bagud, og forventninger der peger fremad, og de blander sig allesammen i et sådant råbende kor af modsigelsesfyldte forhåbninger at jeg dårligt kan få ro til at sige, at på dette tidspunkt har så mange drømme fået ørenlyd i Danmark at det måske ikke mere er muligt at fremstille dem på papirets to dimensioner, og det er mit problem.' (314)

What would be a sufficient representation of Danish dreams? This passage seems to claim that text is not enough. If the text is to live up to the ambitions outlined in the *forord*, then it must be 'udtømmende'; but this is not possible in a text-world where dreams and expectations exist in four dimensions and thus take up *space*.

An adequate *forestilling* of the Danish twentieth century, we might muse, can only be achieved by a representation of all the possible *forestillinger* of the Danish twentieth century – and the textual mode cannot live up to these demands. Which brings us back to the very basic assertion that a written history can only ever be a partial one, and suggests, as a corollary, that the heterogeneous spatio-temporal logic of the archive demands that a space of *forestillinger* open up between national reader and text. We shall return to the beguiling ending of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* in chapter 5. In the meantime, the notions of national space and of textual space become increasingly important in chapters 3 and 4.

## Chapter 3

### Living space

#### Peer Hultberg: *Byen og verden* (1992)

‘We exist at a moment where the world is experiencing, I believe, something less like a great life that would develop through time than a network that connects points and weaves its skein [...] Time probably only appears as one of the possible games of distribution between the elements that are spread out in space.’ (Foucault 1998: 175-7)

‘“Glasgow is a magnificent city,” said McAlpin. “Why do we hardly ever notice that?”  
“Because nobody ever imagines living here,” said Thaw... “Think of Florence, Paris, London, New York. Nobody visiting them for the first time is a stranger because he’s already visited them in paintings, novels, history books and films. But if a city hasn’t been used by an artist, not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively.”’ (Gray 1981)

#### Prologue: An ethnographic account of Viborg

Viborg on a damp Sunday in August 2002. From the town’s Danhostel, fully booked this weekend by a group of pensioners from Odense on a *snapsetur* and a few Italian tourists, it is a thirty minute stroll into Viborg proper, up Vinkelvej and left onto Randersvej, across the isthmus that separates the twin lakes of Nørresø and Søndersø. The town is almost deserted; aside from a few bicycling locals and the same Italian tourists who wander expectantly around the closed shopping precincts, the contemporary *flâneuse* must content herself with scanning the faces of buildings, not people. The litany of street-names – Sct Mathias Gade, Jyllandsgade, Jernbanegade – echoes the same saints, places and landmarks that towns throughout Denmark and, indeed, Europe adopt as markers of spatial and social orientation: street-names as ‘a sort of mechanized daily immersion in history’ (Augé 1995: 69).

Viborg Stiftsmuseum opens at eleven o’clock, just as the staff from neighbouring cafés on Hjultorvet are arranging chairs and tables outside on the cobblestones. The museum’s permanent exhibition is concerned with representing ‘Viborgegnens kulturhistorie’, but the ground floor is occupied with a temporary exhibition of

tapestries woven by a co-operative of Danish and recently immigrated women. They narrate traditional stories from Turkey, Bosnia, the Ivory Coast; they illustrate creation myths, and contemporary culture-shocks. Further in, the story of Viborg and the surrounding lands begins, and from the stone- and bronze-age artefacts on the ground floor, the visitor's physical ascent (of a staircase, eclectically, lined with stuffed birds) is rewarded by reassuring evidence of the region's historical progress to the present day. Coins, shop signs, maps, ladies' shoes, bed-frames, portraits, army uniforms, trumpets, telephones, a stained wc; labelled and catalogued, all attest to centuries of lives lived in a medium-sized provincial Danish town. The signifying force of these metonymic ephemera, mythic signs of 'the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular' (Appadurai 1999:230), threatens always to explode the chronological pedagogy that is at once fostered by the building's vertical dimensions and challenged by the horizontal strictures of each labyrinthine floor.

The foregoing account of a Sunday in the empirically-existing Viborg is given, firstly, to introduce some questions of (supermodern) space and place that will be crucial in this chapter, and, secondly, to skirt the highly problematic relationship between an empirical place and its textual representation.

### **1. *Byen og verden* as spatial hi/story**

If Høeg's *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* tropes the biplicity of temporal logic that forms the twin trajectories of Bhabha's double-time of writing the nation, Hultberg's *Byen og verden* maps the processes by which a textual community transforms *res gestae* into *historia rerum gestarum* (Hutcheon 2002: 76). Where *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* relies on the calcified logic of genealogy and teleology both for its subversion of grand narratives and for its very narrative

framework – railing against the national longing for order, and yet irresistibly propelled by it – *Byen og verden* radically displaces chronology as the primary controlling system of the narrative. In abandoning what Benedict Anderson sees as the cognitive link between novel and national imagining – the ‘idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time’ (1991: 26) – *Byen og verden* defamiliarises and de-doxifies the Westocentric, ‘common-sense’ conceptions of time as linear and of causality as temporally determined.

### **1.1. Reconfiguring narrative: or, *From Work to Text***

*Byen og verden* consists of one hundred texts of varying length, each recounting the hi/story of an individual or family in the town of Viborg. *Byen og verden* has the subtitle *Roman i 100 tekster*, and it does indeed consist of a hundred short texts about the (fictional) residents of a (fictional) Viborg over the course of the twentieth century, not arranged chronologically but juxtaposed in a nexus so that the linkages of familial, romantic and social relationships and interactions come to the fore, building a palimpsest of the town. This is a city of hi/stories, not bricks and mortar. The texts are numbered I – C (1 – 100), but arranged ostensibly at random, and span most of the twentieth century, with the historical ballast (in terms of number of texts and weight of events) at mid-century. Some characters appear in several texts, while others sink and disappear in the multitude of townfolk. The hi/stories are related by an unstable voice which has usually been interpreted as a multiple, de-centred narrator; ‘alvidende bysladder’, in Erik Pelle’s useful formulation (1993: 33). *Byen og verden*, then, reconfigures the bare bones of narrative – time and space – and thus encourages a reconsideration of the interrelationship of these dimensions of narrative function and national imagining.

These characteristics have inspired critical analysis from Bakhtinian perspectives: the spacetime of the novel as a formal whole lends itself to application of the chronotope (van der Liet 1999), while the polyphonic and heteroglossic composition of the individual texts suggest the dialogism of spoken and written word and of public and private spheres (Ping Huang 2001). Most analyses grapple with the problem of finding a new way to read a text that so radically departs in its structure not only from the classic or realist novel but also from novels categorised as postmodern by dint of their concern with the constructed nature of narrative and the impossibility of closure of time and space.

As in the case of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, doubts are often expressed by the readers of *Byen og verden* as to its generic status: novel, short story anthology, precursor to the *punkroman*, or something else entirely? The subtitle of *Byen og verden*, 'Roman i hundrede tekster', categorises it as a novel, but the preposition 'i' leaves some room for doubt as to the exact nature of the relationship between the *novel* and the *hundred texts*: which begets which? Pelle ponders whether there is indeed a novel in each of the hundred texts. However, the use of the term 'tekster', rather than 'fortællinger', for example, in the subtitle seems significant; it says something of the relationship between and among the texts that constitute the novel, and indeed, *how* they constitute the novel. Here, we may appeal to Roland Barthes' early discussion of the concept of 'text', in his 1971 essay 'From Work to Text' (Barthes 1977). This essay postulates the respective qualities of the two phenomena, which *Byen og verden*'s subtitle seems to want to emphasise.

- ‘4. The text is plural[...] The text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination. The plural of the Text depends, that is, not on the ambiguity of its contents but on what might be called the *stereographic plurality* of its weave of signifiers (etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric.[...])
5. The work is caught up in a process of filiation. Are postulated: a *determination* of the work by the world (by race, then by History), a *consecution* of works amongst themselves, and a *conformity* of the work to the author.’ (159-160) (emphases in original)

These considerations seem particularly apt in the light of *Byen og verden*, in which the text constituted by the hundred texts – the explosive, disseminatory logic of their ‘stereographic plurality’ – expands potentially far beyond the boundaries of the ‘work’, or the novel. Crucially, though, the framework – or the boundaries – of the textual play here flags itself as belonging, specifically, to the novelistic tradition. It is in the tension between novel-as-work and novel-as-text that *Byen og verden* is able to break new ground. Put differently, if the novel-as-work, as Barthes – as well as *Danske digtere i det tyvende århundrede* – insists, is caught up in ‘a process of filiation’ pertaining both to author and nation of origin, then the novel-as-text, and the texts that constitute it, cannot be contained by either limitation, but play across boundaries of oeuvre, genre and nation.

## 1.2. The spatial turn: space and text in the late twentieth century

Moving from *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* to *Byen og verden* involves a shift of emphasis, on different levels, from time to space. The fascination in the Danish literature of the 1990s with non-linear time has been remarked on, for example by Erik Skyum-Nielsen (2000: 37), who, it will be noted, uses some markedly spatial language: ‘Læst i et sammenlignende nordisk perspektiv udmærker ny dansk prosa sig mest ved undersøgelsen af *momentet* og dets mulige åbning – nedad mod kroppen, fysikken, døden, opad mod himlen, mod metafysikken, mod en drømt eller anet



mening.’ In *Byen og verden*, space, rather than time, is the controlling metaphor, and the national metanarrative that is unpacked. It should be emphasised that what is at issue here is not merely a new emphasis on space and place in the novel; after all, as Bjarne Thorup Thomsen puts it, ‘romanen har fået sin stedsans ind med modernælken, eftersom der var en tæt sammenhæng mellem *rejsen* og den tidlige roman’ (1995: 54). Neither is it purely a question of an exaggerated resistance to a linear chronology in narrative, or the adoption of ‘spatiality’ as a critical metaphor for modern fiction’s rejection of Lessing’s nomination of it as a ‘time art’ by means of rejecting an absolutely linear or chronological temporal order (Burton 1996).

Rather, a ‘certain spatial turn,’ as Jameson reluctantly admits, offers ‘one of the more productive ways of distinguishing postmodernism from modernism proper’ (1991: 154). Thus, not just a problematisation of time, but a re-arranging of its segments according to a spatial logic in the telling of it. The contention of the present study is not that *Byen og verden* deconstructs the metanarrative of linear time by rejecting it as an ordering principle (though it certainly does!), but that this text explores and plays with its own narrative space and that of the community it narrates, mapping both a history in space and a history of the space of the community, and thereby tapping into the ‘spatial turn’ in the human sciences of the 1980s and 1990s. In so doing, *Byen og verden* questions both the space and history of the textual and national imagined community. It goes without saying that the two dimensions of the narrative cannot effectively be considered in isolation from each other, and so the discussion will tend to adopt the term ‘spacetime’, as it is employed by Middleton and Woods, to emphasise that space and time are not produced or lived distinctly (2000: 133). In

each section of the argument below, then, the logic is that of the shift of emphasis from time to space, rather than a leap from one ontological category to another.

### 1.2.1. Space in/and history

A return to space as an object of inquiry, or, at least, a call for such a turn, is typical of the fiction and the historiography of the late twentieth century, and immanent in any thinking about the nation, as Bhabha's dictum on the mythic homogenising force of national borders makes clear: '[t]he difference of space returns as the Sameness of time' (1994: 149). The national boundaries and the space they de-limit are as much a 'grand narrative' as any coherent account of the nation's teleological development through time. Østergård, too, makes it clear how the *post hoc* construction of consistent national boundaries has contributed to the imagining of a coherent literary and cultural history of Denmark since 1864 (1992: 38). However, as Edward Soja comments (1999: 114-5), not until the late 1980s was a shift away from a historical hermeneutic, or imagination, perceptible. Soja calls for a balanced approach, a 'creative co-mingling' (115) of historicism and human geography, echoing Foucault's observation, tellingly placed at the beginning of his lecture *Different Spaces*, that 'it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space' (1998: 175). Foucault's answer to his own call for a history of space, in particular in *Different Spaces*, has been criticised as frustratingly incomplete, for his examples tend to reply on metaphors of architecture, rendering the space that he tries to historicise too concrete, and the power that flows through space too all-encompassing (Middleton & Woods 2000: 273-75).

As Henri Lefebvre insists, the sense of space has tended to be repressed by the Western discourse of linear time, but, in his poetic formulation: '[h]istorical formations flow into world-wide space much like rivers debouching into the ocean' (cited in Middleton & Woods 2000: 275). Lefebvre's ambition was to spatialise history, calling for a history *in* space, rather than Foucault's history *of* space. Both theorists are concerned with the participation of space in history, the ways in which space becomes politically and/or symbolically charged. Space, then, is not a neutral stage on which national history is played out; space, like time, and history, is produced by scientific and social discourses, by social formations and interactions. It is not useful to dismiss space as the 'theatrical flat' or backdrop to history, argue Middleton and Woods; lived experience takes place both in the 'empirical, rational space perceived as a void to be filled up' and in representational space, which is 'charged with emotional and mythical meanings, community symbolism and historical significances' (2000: 284). We can draw a parallel here between the illusion of empty homogeneous space and the homogeneous, empty time identified by Benjamin and Anderson as the constructed container of modern history, a time that now and again can be ruptured by various conceptions of non-linear time.

### **1.2.2. The body and society in space**

Lived space begins with the body, and the things that it encounters. The relationship of the individual subject – or, indeed, a collective of subjects – to space is manifold. In an early interjection in the mapping of cyberspace (though 'mapping', as will become clear later, is not the most appropriate metaphor for this type of space), McKenzie Wark (1993: 2) finds the development of a new kind of space of the late twentieth century to be prompted by the interaction of culture and technology:

throughout human history, ‘the prevailing cultural technologies which are themselves the accumulated production of social actions and conflict’ (such as the cantilever, Cubism, the cinema) have repeatedly changed ‘relations of flesh to space’. The significance of the new logic of cyberspace – and its relationship with the textual-real-world spatial folds discussed above – to *Byen og verden* will be explored towards the end of this chapter. For now, it is necessary to note that the three-way ‘space-species interface’ suggested by Wark form the basis of thinking about both textual and empirical space that runs through this chapter:

‘Firstly, the *instrumental* relation of body to space: the ability to make space work for one, or conversely, its ability to make one work and conform to *its* form. Secondly, the *imaginative* relation of subjectivity to space: the way the spaces we make suggest an architectonics for thought and creative action, or conversely, the way purely poetic thought can be realised in concrete space. Thirdly, the *philosophical* relation to space: our understanding of the reality of space in relation to one’s own flesh and spirit, and conversely, one’s grip on this subjective being as suggested by the spaces our bodies inhabit.’ (2)

Space can thus be seen as contingent on, and constitutive of, social practices, often rooted in the body, that define a community over time. The cross-fertilisation of the disciplines of anthropology and history during the 1990s has led to a deepened understanding of how societies function in spacetime. As Kirsten Hastrup insists:

‘A truly “historical” anthropology must include reference to both space and time, not only because “history” is the unfolding of society through time but also because “society” is the institutional form of historical events [...] “Worlds” can be seen as self-defining social spaces within which particular realities are generated, regenerated, or transformed through social practice.’ (1992: 7)

The Danish historian Søren Mørch’s use of architectural space as a hermeneutic tool in his *Den sidste Danmarkshistorie* (see chapter 1) is one example of the turn to space

as a dimension of historiography and the tarnishing of the ‘alluring logic of historicism’ (Soja 1999: 116) in explaining the synchronic functioning of societies.

### 1.2.3. Space in text

And how are these dimensions of lived experience negotiated in text? Rawdon Wilson expresses rather succinctly the slipperiness of the space of fictional worlds, which is a purely conceptual space:

‘Space, understood in its most primitive sense (a distance to be crossed, an openness between points, one of which is occupied by a perceiving subject, filled by something, sunlight, moonlight, hot dust, cold mud or emptiness) seems omnipresent in literature, but rather hard to place. There doesn’t seem to be a vocabulary sufficiently capacious to discuss space. ‘You may talk about deictics, copresence, coordination, distances, surfaces, exteriors, interiors, volume and plasticity, but the units of measurement are lacking: literary space, in being conceptual, cannot be measured, but it can be experienced. It is this experience that leads me to claim that space is invariably present in fiction though never precisely so.’ (1995: 215-6)

Wilson goes on to clarify how fictional space may or may not be constructed on the back of extratextual (‘real world’) norms of deictics and description: (a) these may operate in the text much as they do in the extratextual world (realism), (b) they may operate according to axioms peculiar to the text (fantasy), or (c) they may, obviously, generate space by appeal to a mixture of the two sets of assumptions (217-8), as we witnessed in the strangely mis-formed, magical realist national Danish space of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*. The construction of textual space, whether based on rules obtaining in the real world, or on digression from these rules, depends on the reader’s store of knowledge of, and personal interpretation of, these rules; in other words, the kinds of knowledge about real-world distances, borders, topologies etc. that are mastered by a (postnational) model reader. Wilson is writing about the construction of space in magical realist works and, as he points out, ‘magical realist’

texts could hardly function as such without an appeal to extratextual ontologies or metaphysics. The seamless, ‘natural’ superimposition in such texts of possibilities and impossibilities happening in space are interpreted, argues Wilson, according to a ‘principle of spatial folding’ (222), which itself is constitutive of the magical realist genre. *Byen og verden* does not fall easily into the category of magical realism, but it does juxtapose and superimpose different spatialities, which necessitates readerly adjustments between hybrid spacetimes that stand in varying relationship to real-world geometries and geographies, making the boundaries of Viborg morph to encompass and subvert the *national* space.

### **1.3. Space, place and memory: the novel and the nation**

The following explores the tension between, on the one hand, space, or, rather, between this renewed critical interest in space, and, on the other, the anthropological notion of place, as well as their problematic intersection with textual ‘stedsans’. What is ultimately at stake is the possible coexistence in textual space of the *urban* and *national* imaginary.

If the novel is indeed a conduit for the national imagination, the textual world must spark off associations and meanings for the postnational model reader based on his or her knowledge of places and spaces in the extratextual world (the real-world referent). As the train pulls into Viborg, there are no track-side hoardings promoting the town as ‘home of Peer Hultberg’, or as ‘the inspiration for *Byen og verden*’. Neither is there any mention to be found of Hultberg’s novel in Viborg Stiftsmuseum. Wirth-Nesher (1996: 11) emphasises the symbiotic relationship of text and place in cities such as Dublin which have been immortalised in novels; the annual peripatetic celebration of

Bloom's Day, and statues such as the affectionately-termed 'tart with the cart' aka Joyce's Molly Bloom, create a double-helix of imagining the city through the text and reading the text against the city. Such activities are both commercially-engineered and organically-self-replicating, and are implicated in many complex ways in the activities of nation-building and city-planning. *Byen og verden* has hardly reached the heights of notoriety of Joyce's *Dubliners* or *Ulysses* – neither the Odense pensioners nor the waiter serving on Hjultorvet had heard of the novel. Nevertheless, a similar double-helix of reading and imagining is postulated in this study in the symbiosis of text and nation.

The meaning concentrated in places and distilled in their representations in text is shifting and unstable, between readers and over time; the curious character of supermodern place, as we shall see, co-exists with historical places, and is a concern of *Byen og verden* as it charts the movement of the community through the socio-cultural developments of the century.

### **1.3.1. Anthropological place**

#### **1.3.1.1. Places and non-places**

'There are spaces,' writes the French anthropologist Marc Augé, 'in which the individual feels himself to be a spectator without paying much attention to the spectacle' (1995:173). Such spaces are 'non-places' for Augé, in this specific case the tourist's non-place, where an involuntary reversal of the tourist gaze leads the visitor to watch herself consuming 'local' history, or, for the resolutely independent traveller, strolling the streets of her destination, 'soaking up' the culture. Hana Wirth-Nesher attributes to the average tourist not only 'a perspective of anticipated remembrance'

(1996: 118), but also a tendency to draw analogies with similar ‘local’ objects and landmarks back home (117). The ‘non-place’, then, is an absence of the three criteria that define that place that is ‘back home’ (in technical terms an anthropological place): that its on-going creation is *relational*, *historical* and *concerned with identity* (Augé 1995: 77 and *passim*). ‘Home’ can be conceptualised on various scales, not the least significant of which is the nation. Part of the condition of supermodernity, argues Augé, is the proliferation of non-places, sites lacking incorporated history, either because they are of necessity inherently transitory – airport departure lounges, refugee camps, hotels, the Danhostel network – or because they do not integrate ‘earlier places’ but circumscribe, signal and classify them as ‘places of memory’ (78), such as tourist attractions.

People invest places with this quality of memory, be it ‘authentic’ or of the ‘supermodern’ variety, a process which implicates all three of Wark’s dimensions of flesh-space relations: instrumental, imaginative and philosophical. The problem of how this process works exercises Middleton & Woods (2000), who question the dominant psychological models of memory as an individual practice, and of text as a recording system for memories (85-86). They use the term ‘textual memory’ (which will also be adopted in this study, and will be explored in more depth in chapter 5) in order to emphasise that memory-building is a work of collaboration between the individual, the collective or community (social memory), and textual as well as non-inscriptional practices of memory. Individual and collective memories are, at least in part, shaped by prevailing discourses of history, temporality, and by ‘the necessary conditions for social relations with the past’ (86). Popular opinion both colludes in and bewails practices of memory which are considered less than authentic, an



ambiguity of remembering and forgetting which applies as much to tourist attractions as it does to the nation itself. Thus the social memory associated with Viborg Stiftsmuseum, or Viborg Katedralskole, say, is a complex of felt and learned, or, to re-contextualise Bhabha's terms, performative and pedagogical narratives; a complex of childhood visits (the affect associated with boredom or fascination), municipal commemorations (dedication ceremonies, jubilees), local histories (press, advertising campaigns, documentary film), and, potentially, works of fiction (my own experience of the 'real' Viborg, outlined in the 'ethnographic' prologue, was necessarily negotiated through the text *Byen og verden*); all in the context of popular or scientific dogma as to how memory and temporality work.

#### 1.3.1.2. **Imagining local and national place**

Places and non-places, of course, overlap, coalesce and cross-fertilise. Viborg Stiftsmuseum is an anthropological place with its own history, and yet also one of a series of 'must-sees' – the Danish term *seværdigheder* is more than apt here – listed on the back of free tourist maps from Thurso to Naxos; one of Anderson's 'unbound series' (1998: 1).<sup>12</sup> The museum's representation of the town as both rooted in the geographical and cultural locality of *Viborg stift* and as a metonymic microcosm of the Danish nation is cross-cut by the display of (post)modern 'multicultural' co-operation (the tapestries) in a 'homely', gendered crafts medium. The mass-produced tourist maps that guide the Sunday visitor to the museum are a symptom of supermodernity's fetishising of local 'authenticity', the clearest expression of which Augé sees in the signs advertising historical landmarks on the outskirts and approach

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<sup>12</sup> Given the Welfare State's funding of local museums and libraries, it is tempting, but perhaps overblown, to appeal here to Anderson's comment on the national logo on such series as postage stamps: 'It was precisely the infinite quotidian reproducibility of its regalia that revealed the real power of the state.' (1991: 183)

roads of French towns: ‘as if alluding to former times and places were today just a manner of talking about present space’ (1995: 74). Wirth-Nesher, too, observes a totalising impulse in contemporary tourism which results in an atemporal reductiveness, where the sites and sights emblematic of a particular city (and, by iconic extension, nation) are organised for the tourist according to spatial, not temporal/historical logic (1996: 116-7), a logic that is often supported by those same free maps, and by ready-made historic tourist ‘trails’. Landmarks become hyper-metonymic for tourists, who ‘approach foreign cities with a whole cultural repertoire in place, one that tends to totalize cities and nations’ (117). But natives, too, are susceptible to the ‘labelling’ of landmarks as national icons; their ‘official’ labelling as such is bound up in the complex of meanings imputed by the individual and the collective to any identifiable item in the physical environment.<sup>13</sup>

It goes without saying that this anxiety about lack of historical ‘depth’ is reflected in public debate about dwindling awareness of history amongst the younger generations, itself another orthodoxy regarding the necessary conditions for social relations with the past. Many commentators have identified as the impetus for this anxiety the ‘local-global nexus’ of contemporary globalisation, which incites ‘a growing interest in the embeddedness of life histories within the boundaries of place, and with the continuities of identity and community through local memories and heritage’ (Morley & Robins 1995: 116). Harvey, too, sees in the contemporary quest for roots and ethnic identity a reaction against the commodification of images of the nation (1990: 292ff.). Clearly, then, the imagining of ‘local’ place and ‘national’ space are intertwined. The heritage industry implies an increasingly self-conscious re-construction of identity in

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<sup>13</sup> Basic training for Edinburgh and Lothians Tourist Board staff includes the revelation that anyone spending time in the city for business or leisure purposes is a tourist, even those who live there.

the form of 'place' and 'memory', within a context of accelerating spatial mobility and cultural exchange that blurs the parameters of 'tourist' and 'native'. Wirth-Nesher uses the metaphor of 'Translated Cities' that 'domesticate the foreign' (1996: 111): '[t]he tourist's encounter with a landmark is necessarily cross-cultural, the meeting of one collective memory with another' (113). But 'domestic' and 'foreign' are not necessarily nationally defined, as *Byen og verden* makes very apparent. Returning to this novel, we can begin to regard it as one locus of memory in the complex national imaginary of late twentieth-century Denmark.

Mapping the city, orienting oneself within it, is, of course, a natural human impulse. If a novel takes as its setting (or even character) a city that exists in the real world, the choice of a 'mythologized' (Pike 1981: i), world famous city such as London, New York or Mumbai may be an indicator of its assumed status as postnational literature (Allen 1995). Alternatively, the choice of a 'local' city such as Glasgow (such designations are, of course, open to question) may speak to its function as local literature. In either case, the mythic value of a particular city is imputed by the reader according to historical period and cultural convention, as well as to generic convention (for example, the contingent boundaries of 'realism'). As Pike comments: 'however artfully the word-city may be decked out with the trimmings of a real one, [the two] are parallel or analogous rather than identical' (1981: 13).

The fictional world generated in *Byen og Verden* has at its centre the 'real' town of Viborg, in mid-Jutland. While this town was at one time the capital of the province of Jutland, and was the meeting place for the Estates of Jutland in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, its status as a leading town on the peninsula even at that time was overshadowed by

the larger industrial towns of Århus and Aalborg. In this sense, as Wilson puts it, the text has an element of realism and therefore ‘may be said to borrow diverse modes of discourse, including geographical discourse, that belong to the truth claims made in the world outside the text’ (1995: 217); in turn, the textual Viborg has always already a certain ‘vividness’ before the mind’s eye (218). It is, however, certainly not one of the few Danish towns which would be recognised outside Denmark, and its various physical features would not signify much to the average Dane. In this sense, it is more of a semiotic ‘blank canvas’ than perhaps even a major foreign city such as Paris or London for most Danish readers. As Middleton and Woods suggest, ‘[t]he difference between the “real” city and the city of the imagination, the representational city, is increasingly falling away’ (2001: 277); the map of Viborg provided by *Byen og verden* has less to do with a mimetic representation of a real environment and more to do with what James Donald describes as an urban ‘imagined environment’ (ibid: the analogy with ‘imagined community’ is deliberate). As van der Liet points out, the fortuitous combination of Viborg’s small size and rich history as a regional centre render the town an everytown: a ‘miniature, concentrated representation of Danish society, or, more precisely, of Danish middle-class culture’ (1999: 212). Already, then, multiple imaginative spaces are potentially present in the Viborgverse.

In generating a fictional spacetime, a plexus of places and memories in shifting spatial folds – nevertheless with a real-world referent, the town of Viborg in Denmark – the text opens out onto both local and national space. How does the textual universe of Viborg – the ‘Viborgverse’ – to return to Anderson, ‘seep’ into reality? Or, to paraphrase Wark, how are we to move from a space-species interface to a text-space-species interface?

### 1.3.1.3. Heterotopias

Foucault's identification of a special group of places, *heterotopias*, can be seen as a third way between place and non-place. This concept stands a little outside Foucault's official body of work; it was promulgated in a speech, 'Des Espaces Autres', given in 1967, but not approved for publication in French until 1984, and translated for the journal *Diacritics* two years later as 'Of Other Spaces'.<sup>14</sup> Heterotopias are 'other places' such as museums, libraries, fairs and cemeteries, spaces where sites co-exist and relations come into being, which 'silently question the space in which we live' (Flynn 1991:167). They are 'actually lived and socially created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time, the habitus of social practices' (Soja 1999: 119). Heterotopias are not a product of supermodernity but common to all modern societies, and the concept itself forms part of Foucault's call for a history of space.

According to *Different Spaces*, the characteristics of heterotopias include the following. They are often places of social crisis or 'deviance' (puberty, deflowering, the containment of old age, criminality), and, as such, entering them often requires some ritual, or special status; they contain several different incompatible sites in a single 'real' place, such as the theatre or the garden; they are linked to 'slices in time', opening out onto 'heterochronies'; the cemetery constitutes a break with social time, opening into eternity or oblivion, and – most interestingly - the modern museum and library represent attempts to build up a store of accumulating time, gathering multiple epochs and fashions at one site. Furthermore, heterotopias have a function in relation to all other spaces; like utopias (which, in contrast to heterotopias, do not exist) they

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<sup>14</sup> The translation used in the present study, entitled *Different Spaces*, differs from the *Diacritics* translation, and is found in Foucault 1998: 175-86

construct a space of illusion that questions other spaces of life, or they construct a compensatory space that is just as ordered as lived space is jumbled (colonies, claims Foucault, have often had this function).

Since they allow for a coalescence of imaginary and mythic spaces with real, concrete space – which together, as Soja points out, constitute ‘lived’ space – the concept of heterotopia is extremely useful in the analysis of textual space and place. Bearing in mind the symbiotic relationship of text and social memory, we can surmise that there are points of contact between *lived* space and *literary* space, between instrumental and imaginative space-species relations, and between places, non-places and heterotopias in the world of the text and in the world outside it.

#### 1.4. The textual space(s) of the novel

The complex interactions of text and town in *Byen og verden* speak to – and of – the imagining of the local and the national, and the spacetime thereof. More precisely, in *Byen og verden* can be seen an interesting constellation of textual spaces.

Firstly, *byen*: (a) the representation of empirically-existing Viborg landmarks in text, and their stasis and shift in space and time; that is, not a mimetic representation of a place, but a representation of how spaces *become* places (and non-places), in Augé’s sense; and (b) the representation of a differentiated social space in which relative power and resistance are based on gender, ethnicity, class, etc. and find their expression in the unstable language of the narrative. These two aspects of space are closely linked.

Secondly, *verden*: the representation of a disjunctive space of ‘global cultural flows’ and of ethno- and mediascapes, and associated ‘imagined world(s)’ (Appadurai 1999), in which Viborg and its inhabitants are situated.

Thirdly, *teksten*: the literary space of the text; the *betydningsrum* of the text, its conceptual space for the construction of meaning, or, as described by Frederik Tygstrup: ‘[d]en fortløbende strukturering af teksten [som] bliver en fortløbende produktion af rumlighed, ikke en fremstilling af rum, men en produktion af relationer, som har en rumlig karakter’ (1999: 41).

Tygstrup argues that this ‘meaning-space’ of a text is both medium and model for the historically- and culturally-specific experience of space (44); the construction of *textual* and *lived* space is a collaboration of text and reader. Such a splicing of textual and extra-textual space could just as well be the object of Edward Soja’s praise of Foucault’s relational space of heterotopias: ‘a space rarely seen for it has been obscured by a bifocal vision that traditionally views space as either a mental construct or a physical form’ (1999: 119). This brings us back to the questions raised in chapter 2 in connection with Anderson’s idea of ‘seepage’ of textual imagining into reality; we will have to ask whether and how the formally innovative literary spacetime of *Byen og verden* can enable us to think late twentieth-century global/local geometries, and practices of history and memory, as they intersect with those of the nation. If, as Middleton & Woods argue, ‘[f]iction is able to mobilise emergent metaphors and rhetorical forms which have not yet become established enough to register on sociological screens’ (2000: 278), the representation of the various dimensions of

urban spacetime in *Byen og verden* must speak to late twentieth-century imaginings of community.

## 2. *Byen*: Urban space

The title of this section immediately throws up a problem, for with *Byen og verden* we are not dealing with the representation of a *metropolis* in text. However, the extant scholarship on the seductive subject of the representation of the city in literature is fulsomely applicable to *Byen og verden*. If the denomination of ‘city’ were only awarded on the basis of population, then (as suggested by the Danish term *storby*), Viborg would certainly not constitute a city. However, the status of ‘city’ is often awarded on the basis of cultural activity, or the presence of a cathedral, rather than size. More crucially, the characteristics of a city which concern literary theorists and geographers tend to be based on the consequences of population *density* rather than sheer numbers. There is, however, one essential qualitative difference between the popular conception of ‘town’ and ‘city’, which is rooted in the modern notion of the city as a place of solitude and isolation. For Wirth-Nesher, this condition is the link between textual and extratextual urban space:

‘Cities intensify the human condition of missed opportunities, choices, and inaccessibility [...] The city dweller learns to contend with the sensation of partial exclusion, of being an outsider, by mental reconstruction of areas to which he or she no longer has access, and also by inventing worlds to replace those that are inaccessible.’ (1996: 9)

This sense of ‘outsiderness’ (ibid.) is usually thought to stem from the plenitude and anonymity promised by the metropolis. If the city is indeed, in our era, the site of ethnic and social exile, flux and diaspora, where ‘the perplexity of the living is most



acutely experienced' (Bhabha 1990: 320), then the provincial town is still regarded as a homogeneous and claustrophobic site of social control. The experience of social control is not merely the romantic (if traumatic) memory of small-town girls who escape, but also documented by anthropology. As one anthropologist has succinctly observed,

'It is difficult for people raised in the anonymity of an urban environment to imagine living in a setting in which you are continually confronted with the *living memory* [...]of your mistakes and failures' (cited in Delamont 1995: 178, my emphasis)

### **2.1. The chronotopes of city and provincial town**

This rings true, for it identifies the temporal, or historical, dimension of social control. Bakhtin, too, seems to regard the spacetime of the provincial town as a different chronotope from that of the city (the latter is not listed in *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel* as an independent chronotope, though scholars have imputed it to be an important one in twentieth-century literature. See, e.g., van der Liet 1999: 212-3). Bakhtin posits Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* as a *tour de force* of the small-town chronotope. The provincial town, with its 'stagnant' life, is 'the locus for everyday cyclical time. Here there are no events, only "doings" that constantly repeat themselves [...] It is a viscous and sticky time that drags itself slowly through space.' (1981: 247-8). Significantly, he goes on to explain that provincial time cannot be used as the 'primary' time of the novel; only as a kind of 'ancillary', background time to 'temporal sequences that are more charged with energy and event' (248). I will suggest below that *Byen og verden* is best thought of as a constellation of texts, each charged with its own chronotope, which, as Bakhtin postulates, are 'mutually inclusive' (sic) (252).

What, then, is the chronotope of the city? Burton Pike (1981) traces the history of urban literature in parallel to the development of the city as a phenomenon of Western civilisation: from ancient seats of Empire, through the medieval and Renaissance cities, to the industrial and, in our time, the post-industrial city. The era of the novel, he argues, has also been that of the post-Enlightenment dominance of linear time and history, which conflicts with the demands of the representation of the city as a physical object in space (120). The classic pre-modern city novel, most critics agree, tends to establish a polarity between city and countryside. The city is represented as a necessary evil, a place of industrial smoke and corruption, worldliness and vice, to which the young man from the provinces must travel in order to improve himself socially (and economically) and undergo a spiritual education. Thereafter he returns to the country to marry and live out his life in rural peace and innocence (Squier 1984: 117-18). A fundamental shift in literary treatment of the city occurs during the nineteenth century, as urbanisation and industrialisation progress in Western Europe: the city becomes the 'natural' environment for the novel. Moving towards high modernism, the city novel is characterised by the effective absence of the countryside as a concrete place; the country exists only in the background, as a kind of pastoral idyll. All life is in the city; the city becomes the whole world, containing the benefits of the countryside as well as the perceived disadvantages of urban life, and topography becomes psychologised, producing urban tropes based on pathetic fallacy: isolation, fragmentation, transitoriness (Pike 1981: 71-97). In Nathaniel Hawthorne's formulation, it is a 'paved solitude' (cited in Pike 86), where the exclusion of the individual is juxtaposed with the apparent belonging of the mass. To be in a city is always to be aware of missing something; the 'reading' of a city is simultaneously finding and losing, map and labyrinth (120). Pike argues that the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen

the fragmentation or ‘etherealisation’ of the literary city in line with the ever-increasing urban sprawl of the post-industrial megalopolis (127ff). Correspondingly, Middleton and Woods see the rhizomatic logic of Los Angeles as the epitome of late modernity’s spatialising impulse, and of the creation of non-places through the depletion of history (2000: 283).

## **2.2. *Byen* as textual community**

Yet it seems too hasty to polarise the chronotopes of ‘town’ and ‘city’ as, respectively, community and stasis, and isolation, alienation, flux. Within each city, countless sub-communities can be identified, based on ethnicity, kinship, or simple spatial proximity. The shifting and individual experience of ‘outsiderness’ can be produced just as readily, and be felt more acutely, among townsfolk precisely because of the *lack* of anonymity and plenitude inherent in the small town. Another truism of much theory on the modern urban novel is that the city is such a complex space that only text can represent it in all its perplexity. However, as Anderson makes clear in his ‘small-print’, even the smallest communities of face-to-face contact are always, to some extent, imagined (1991: 6); there are always the unknowable ‘hvide mellemrum’ of other lives. It is the qualitative – not the quantitative – complexity of any field of social interaction that is hard to capture:

‘The point is not that only fiction can represent urban space, but that fictional representations of urban space open up all the questions of organisation and control on which spatial and temporal representations are made.’ (Middleton & Woods 2000: 309)

The shifting demarcations of social in-group and out-group are produced in different ways in different societies, but no community could be imagined without the power to exclude and the resistancy of being excluded. Wirth-Nesher suggests another

chronotope that would be most typical of the modern urban novel, implicating both the sense of flux and isolation emphasised by Pike, and the remnants of Bakhtin's nineteenth-century chronotopes of provincial town and parlour:

'[t]he opposition of parlour and street has been eroded. Most of the action in these fictional worlds takes place in spaces that fuse public and private, that that are uneasily indeterminate: coffee houses, theaters, museums, pubs, restaurants, hotels and shops [...] "home" is a shifting space, a provisional setting, an intersection of public and private that is always in process' (1996: 20)

Other critics have identified this very tension between public and private as the underlying concern of both *Byen og verden* and *Requiem* (Ping Huang, 2001: 174; van der Liet 1999: 215).

### 2.3. City Codes

Hana Wirth-Nesher's (1996: 11 and *passim*) typology of landmarks for reading the modern urban novel presupposes no distinction between 'reading' and 'living' the city: reading a city is part of the practice of living a city. Her four overlapping 'environments' can be thought of as planes that intersect with the city of text and the city of bricks and mortar:

- *Built*: lay-out, architecture, any object built by human inhabitants
- *Natural*: any inclusion or intervention of nature in the built environment
- *Verbal*: any environmental written or spoken language such as graffiti, street-signs, conversation
- *Human*: generic 'types' such as street-sellers, beggars, shoppers, prostitutes that constitute a typical feature of a given setting

Wirth-Nesher's typology of landmarks, along with our concepts of anthropological place, non-place and heterotopia, enables us to trace the palimpsest of sites and times that constitute the textual Viborg, and its relations with the extratextual world.

## **2.4. Viborg as historical place and socially differentiated space**

### **2.4.1. The built environment**

Erik Pelle (1993) wonders whether Povl Hestlund, the character who appears in the first and last texts of *Byen og verden*, might be a metafictional trace of the author himself, who shares his initials.<sup>15</sup> A more interesting proposition is Povl Hestlund's family home, 'en af de få gamle gårde der stadig lå indeklemmt i den bymæssige bebyggelse' (Hultberg 1998: 5). The historical continuity is strengthened by Povl's black-market egg-selling business, the produce of his hens kept down in the cellar as they had been in his mother's day. While this first text spans the courtship and, ultimately, the broken engagement of Povl and Kitty, a religious studies teacher at the Katedralskole, the novel 'ends' (for want of a more appropriate verb) with a text that narrates a longer version of Povl's life, from childhood to happy marriage. This last text also covers the demolition and reconstruction of the old farm, a process that encapsulates the wider movement in the novel – when reconstructed chronologically – from embedded ('indeklemmt') historical place to postmodern 'non-place', though this same movement is also a spatial one, 'fjernt fra Viborg'. Povl has received a tempting financial offer to put the property up for re-development as apartments, a proposition which entails the construction of an illusive allusion to a former time and place which, for the estate agents' blurb at least, is 'just a manner of talking about present space' (Augé 1995: 74):

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<sup>15</sup> See also the murdered Palle Hvidt in text LXXIV, discussed below (p231)

‘fredningsmyndighederne havde forlangt at facaden blev stående som den var, men det er klart, det er nok at en enkel lille bulldozer lige kommer til at røre ved noget og så er den façade røget, og så forlangtes det blot at den skulle genopføres i samme stil, og stil og stil [...]’ (Hultberg 1998: 292)

What distresses Povl most is the loss of his mother’s garden:

‘de [havde] lagt alle murstenene til facaden midt i bedet, men det gjorde nu ikke noget, forklarede de, der skulle alligevel laves parkeringsplads og lægges *rigtige gammeldags brosten* over det hele [...]’ (293, my emphasis)

Thus the representation of the built environment in *Byen og verden* is overwhelmingly a matter of the representation of change over time and difference in space. Sigrid Nicolaisen’s flat in Kolonnaden on Sct Mathiasgade is burnt down in text LXIV, much to her relief, allowing her to move her growing family to a new house on Ramsvej, more in tune with her position as ‘frisk Københavnerpige’ slumming it in the provinces. The fire is the result of a gas leak, ignited by a neighbour’s match, and the narrator’s collocation of memories surrounding the incident indicates its importance in the town’s folklore: ‘Braget vækkede så at sige alle i Sct Mathiasgade, selv Sparekassedirektøren var kommet ned på gaden og uden flip, og fru Andersen hævdede senere at hendes hårs pludselige hennarødme skyldtes chokket’ (163). For the children, the site of the old flat becomes a lesson in epistemology, that there was a time before they existed: ‘hun, efter at have været inde med børnene at se Snehvidefilmen i Fotorama, spøgefuldt kunne vise Jens-Peter og hans to år yngre søster Helen de to granitøjler og deres overbygning med ordene, Der boede Far og Mor før I rigtig var til’ (164).

In XXXVIII, Paulette Børgesen-Olsen and her new husband are given the wherewithal to build a house as a wedding present from her father. In this text, the early 1950s are characterised not only by the imminent Korean War, but also by the contemporary changes in the urban environment: ‘Hans Tausensvej på dette tidspunkt førtes igennem, som man udtrykte det, hvilket vil sige med asfalt forbandtes med Bispevænget’ (84). This same house is later almost rented out to a Nato officer’s family from Karup (85), evoking the historical development of the establishment of Nato’s Northern European base near Viborg. These cases illustrate the temporal orientation provided by the text to shore against the disorientation of chronological disjunction *between* texts. Historical knowledge of events such as the first release of *Snow White*, the establishment of the Nato base (or, indeed, of Nato) are shared by narrator and PMR. On the other hand, the social and spatial disjunction of, say, Sct Mathiasgade and Ramsvej is knowledge shared between narrator and townsfolk, simultaneously excluding the reader and alluding to a half-grasped ‘insiderness’ that the reader may attain by attentive participation in the construction of the Viborgverse.

In fact, the process of building and the principles of architecture are frequently detailed in the novel. Certain differences in the built environment are emblematic of more or less universal social differences. These might be expressed in complex, gossipy renderings of architectural injustices, where the deictics, again, exclude by including those familiar with the arrangement, i.e. anyone who has ever lived in a flat smaller than that of their neighbours:

‘Familien Læshøj boede i stuen og det var den lille stueejlighed med vinduer ud til passagen og til gården, den store var jo kjoleforretningen som ydermere optog et af de værelser der ifølge planen egentlig skulle

have tilhørt dem, så i virkeligheden havde de mindre plads end beboerne af de tilsvarende lejligheder på første, anden og tredje sal.’ (21)

Or the PMR may be able to relate to more specific signifiers of ordinary Danish taste in the built (and therefore social) environment:

‘Det var ham umuligt at undslå sig for at smutte med op på Amtmandshøjen og se hvordan de boede. Det var et langt lavt hus af gule mursten, med mørkbejdset træ, store akvarieagtige dobbelte glastruder, nåletræer foran [...] Luften under de lave lofter syntes indelukket til trods for at dobbeltdørene ud til haven stod på vid gab [...] udsmykningen bestod af talrige genstande af finsk presset glas’ (15)

The need to ‘smutte med op på Amtmandshøjen’ in order to encounter this house, with all its social semiotics, imbues the social distinction with a spatial distinction. The importance of differentiated space within a home is also seen to change over time. The potato merchant Adolf Frederik Høgild-Brock (XXXII) has a permanent memorial to his commercial success built in the form of a villa on Aalborgvej, and employs one of Denmark’s best architects to design a modern house that also preserves the historical dimensions of the site, an architect

‘der ikke alene forstod at respektere grundstykkets prægtige træer, resterne af en tidligere planteskole, men også at forbinde gotisk borgromantik med fornødenhederne hos den moderne familie af 1907 der efter nymodens principper placeredes på eet plan, med køkken og domestikker i en høj kælderetage, og gæster på førstesalen’ (67-8)<sup>16</sup>

Some places, however, elude physical description, but their presence permeates the text all the same. Probably the most important example is Viborg Katedralskole, first introduced in the novel’s first sentence (Ketty Bang-Hansen teaches there) and alluded to regularly throughout the novel as a place of parents’ dreams and ambitions

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<sup>16</sup> The description of the placement of the servants is reminiscent of the appearance of middle-class modesty and its architectural expression in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* (see chapter 2, section 3.2)



for their offspring (sometimes thwarted by the exclusion of working-class children, as in text II); a gathering place for academically-inclined children from the surrounding towns (whose three years as boarders, as in XCVI, are best summed up by Jørn Hjørnbæk's bored subversion of the bucolic mantra to reveal his apathy: 'et in *acedia* ego' (275)); and a launch-pad into the world for the successful (such as Niels Asmus Larsen in XV). The time of the school's spatial relocation is also used as a temporal landmark (29), simultaneously including and excluding from the textual community on the basis of 'insider' knowledge of when the school moved and to where. If chronotopes function as 'a set of culturally and historically defined codes that supply specific representational meaning to temporal and spatial units in literary art' (van der Liet 1998: 209), it is difficult to imagine a more poignant example than Viborg Katedralskole, which gathers national subjects in space and projects the history of its generations of pupils back into the past and forward into the future. This is a school, after all, where the teachers 'vidste [...] udmærket hvad der forstodes under begrebet en god dansk mand' (35). The school building is adorned with a stone eagle whose 'vidtskuende' (31), 'vartegnende' (30) gaze is directed heavenwards, which in the case of Niels Asmus Larsen (text XV) means the celestial heights of both academe and the afterlife. The Katedralskole is, thus, a classic example of a heterotopia, in that it is a place of crisis (the adolescent years); it is a site, like a library, of accumulated knowledge and therefore of times, but projects its students out into the future, and out into the world; it is an exclusive place, requiring the badges of academic and social acceptability for entry; and, like the graveyard, it is a kind of parallel community to the town, since most families (and hi/stories) have some kind of connection to it. Nevertheless, its output is couched in terms of Danishness – *gode danske mænd* –

which sites it within a network or series of national centres of education, relativising Viborg.

The life of Valborg Bæk, whose story is sketched out in text II and then fleshed out in LXXXV, is lived in a series of spaces determined by social class. After her husband's death, she and her son Henning take a damp flat in Sct Mogensgade (7), where she takes in laundry from the well-to-do houses in another part of town where her sisters work; the Kathedralskole is, for Valborg and Henning, a place of broken dreams, for he is refused a place there, despite coming top of his class, and takes a job in a factory on Dumpen instead (7). Borgvold is for her a place iconic of class struggle, ever since she and her son were ejected from the park while distributing Marxist leaflets (233); there, too, her meeting with the doctor Hugo Mosebach is couched in the language of differentiated class and gender: 'hun syntes at svaje og Hugo Mosebach var mand nok til at indse at det ikke var under det kvinder af hendes klasse ellers beskyldes for at svaje' (234). When he offers to help save her Trotskyite son in revolutionary Russia it is possible due to his own connections in high places: 'en fætter til ham var kontorchef i udenrigsministeriet' (235). The place where they conduct their curiously chaste love affair is her 'spinkle gamle plyssofa' (235) in the basement flat. When their paths again cross by chance, years later, they can speak freely, for 'sæd og skik' have changed sufficiently to allow a professional gentleman and a working class woman to converse 'på Sct Mathiasgade, på fortovet over for Handelsbanken' (236). Fittingly for a relationship whose random trajectory has been so explicitly described in terms of urban place and social space, Hugo Mosebach's last 'meeting' with Valborg is in that heterotopia, the graveyard, where he is surprised to see her buried on hallowed ground: 'kunne hun selv have forestillet sig en mere klassesvangert

fænomen, et udtryksstærkere symbol på borgerlige undertrykkelse og udbytning'(237). Graveyards are the great levellers; they open up new spaces and break down socially-defined ones. For Lorenz Bendixen, the search for his father's last resting place through the graveyards of Europe reveals the contingency of 'nationally'-defined spaces:

'hvor havde han mon fundet et sidste hvilested, han var blot blevet meldt savnet, løsgænger havde han jo altid været så ikke engang frikorpset havde han kunnet holde sig til, og igen og igen fandt Lorenz sig alene mellem uniforme kors på store soldaterkirkegårde, blandt de talløses navne, og mange gange vidste han at nationerne var de forkerte men trods alt, soldaterkirkegårde det var de, og måske alligevel' (37)

To complete the dissection of Valborg's Marxist 'class war', the reader must return to text II, however, which ends with Valborg's refusal to attend the funeral of the 'trotskist' son she is now apparently buried with (8). Between the two Bæk-related texts, then, opens up one of those 'hvide mellemrum', where the missing links between one reported 'fact' and another are never explained (except by speculation, in this case Hugo Mosebach's). In demanding that the reader associate the two texts – remember what happened in one and the other, in order to make (partial) sense of both – the text mimics the process according to which the textual graveyard, too, becomes a place of memory for Hugo.

The concern of the novel with the workings of literary memory is made explicit in XXXIX, where Jørgen Andersen spends his boyhood visiting his chum Henning Sigurdsson, and retains memories, 'som han senere, under sine sene studier, måtte sammenligne med Prousts madeleine' (86). That the trigger for these memories is not the aroma of madeleines but cheese considered too strong even for the stomachs of the servants in Henning's wealthy household undermines somewhat the text's opening

line, '[s]tandsforskelle kendte man naturligvis intet til' (86). For Jørgen's journey in social space is mapped out: he goes 'besvinget' from his home in 'Lille Sct Hansgade og en af de faldefærdige rønner skråt over for Fællesbageriet' all the way to the Sigurdssons' 'elegante gulstensvilla der var nybygget på Nørremøllevej med grund helt ned til søen' (86). As with Proust, and reminiscent also of Bakhtin's comments on Goethe's 'Italian time', the *time* that the cheese is served is a 'microscopic' element of everyday life 'that reveals the profound history of its locality' (Bhabha 1990: 294): 'de styrkende stykker ost på groveste grovbrød [...] sattes for familien ved thebordet klokken halv fem [...] og for øvrigt var middagen jo klokken seks som i alle ordentlige hjem' (86).

#### 2.4.2. The natural environment

Viborg has its gardens and parks, and these are usually places of memory. Povl Hestlund's mother would declare every Spring, as her flowers bloomed in turn, testifying to Nature's eternal return: 'Nu kommer den fagre tid jeg ventede' så længe' (292). The flower bed is not 'authentically' reconstructed by developers, as is the fascia of the old Hestlund farmhouse, but buried beneath the parking spaces in the yard (292-3): place improved and re-developed as non-place. In an act of rebellion reminiscent of the text's refraction of linear time, Margot Lehrhøj sows the seeds in her beloved garden at random:

'Som lille pige havde hun også fået en bid af haven til sig selv men i stedet for at så i rækker som sine søskende havde hun blandet alle blomsterfrøene, spredt dem ud over hele sit bed og frydet sig over de sammensætninger af former og farver hun og tilfældet således skabte.'  
(32)

The most imposing aspect of Viborg's natural environment is water. The empirical Viborg wraps itself around the banks of Nørresø and Søndersø, which also constitute a significant *topos* in the textual Viborg. It is hard to appreciate the visual impact of these twin lakes without a visit to Viborg, a revelation which also clarifies the status of the waters, in text as in life, as heterotopia. The banks of the lakes are sites of contemplation, of chance meetings and of recreation; the waters themselves are, occasionally, the last resting place of the suicidal (110). As such, this element of the natural environment, though it hardly changes physically through time, also serves as a chronological indicator. One could argue that the path round the lakes is the inverse of Bakhtin's chronotope of the road, where time fuses with space and flows along its path; this is a road that goes nowhere, but nevertheless (or perhaps therefore) a busy road. In the earlier part of the century it is a haunt of pensive walkers and of those who wish to meet them:

‘Aage Briggs[...]havde haft for vane hver efter at gå en tur om Nørresø altid i samme retning og alle pigerne gik modsatte vej for at møde ham, knikse, fnise’ (38)

‘det var det rene tilfælde at de var kommet til at sidde nede på Borgvold på samme bænk og se ud over Nørresø, og det igen var atter et tilfælde, Hugo Mosebach plejede at undgå Borgvold på sine ture omkring søen’ (233)

At the time of Hugo Mosebach's meeting with Valborg Bæk in Borgvold, strolling round the lake is not a leisurely pursuit of the working classes: ‘og søtur, ja når man har været på benene siden klokken fem om morgenen så er det jo ikke just det man føler trang til.’ (234). Companionship by the lakes often leads to the walkers being regarded as deviant and the subject of gossip:

‘Samtalerne mellem Jørgen og Morten Andersen var intensive, mangen lys sommernat gik de omkring Nørresø een gang, to gange, og engang omkring begge søer og så Nørresø igen, så det var uundgåeligt at de ikke skulle vække fru overingeniør Sigurdssons opmærksomhed’ (200)

The blossoming friendship between Jørgen Andersen and Morten Andersen is the subject of suspicion amongst certain mothers in the town, and though the nature of the gossip is not specified, their friendship tacitly comes to an end when Henning Sigurdsen shouts ‘udkvemsord’ out of his car window. The *excessive* circuitousness of their walking and talking around the lakes metaphorically fills in the gap which gossip leaves unspoken. In times when people’s waking hours are ruled by work, the lakes provide the heterochrony of contemplation and escape. By the end of the century, the time and the energy to enjoy the natural environment is available to most, and jogging round the lakes becomes commonplace in the text, but one which also develops due to changing local institutions and practices: Lise Lykkegaard-Madsen’s toy-boy, for example, ‘løb efter Gymnastikhøjskolens indvielse hver morgen pointeret søen rundt den modsatte vej af de unge studerende’ (142, my emphasis).

#### 2.4.3. The verbal and human environments

If a city is full of people, it will also be full of words. While all city novels, as Wirth-Nesher points out, are ‘verbal environments’ in the sense that they build a city out of words, *Byen og verden* reconstructs the verbal dimension of the history of the town. Put differently, language is not only the vehicle for describing the physical features and chronology of the town; it is a metalanguage, describing its own dialogic patterns, or, like Margot Lehrhøj’s flowers, ‘sammensætninger af former og farver’ (32). But Wirth-Nesher defines the verbal environment of the city as any written or spoken language, including advertisements, graffiti and streetnames, and conversations overheard (1996: 11). This environment will be considered together with the human

environment in *Byen og verden*, for the two are more or less indistinguishable in this novel. While there are isolated examples of the trappings of Wirth-Nesher's human environment – the feet of passers-by, tramps – the people who populate the cityscape are also the speaking subjects. People are either saying, meeting or moving in this novel; as we shall see, there is no stable narrative 'point of view' or gaze that would usefully distinguish between people as characters and people as features of the urban environment.

Marc Augé agrees that language is a constituent element of anthropological place:

'Behind the cycle of the hours and the outstanding features of the landscape, what we find are words and languages: the specialized words of the liturgy, of 'ancient ritual', in contrast to the 'song and chatter' of the workshop; and the words, too, of all those who speak the same language, and thus recognise that they belong to the same world. Place is completed through the word, through the allusive exchange of a few passwords between speakers who are conniving in private complicity.'  
(1995: 77)

#### **2.4.3.1. Between speech and writing: gossip as social control and historiography**

Social control and differentiation is essential to *Byen og verden* not only through spatial differentiation: language is also caught up in power and resistancy. The individual texts of *Byen og verden*, as Marianne Ping Huang recognises, are all instances of anecdote, rumour and gossip. Adapting Bakhtin's writings on the loss in modernity of the Ancients' division between private and public sphere, she argues that *Byen og verden* turns on the space between spoken and unspoken, heard and unheard, public and private:

‘Gossiping is the utmost anonymous sphere of public speech and differs in its dislocation of source from rhetorical form, which always positions its speaker. Dislocation makes gossip a crucial example of the bitter carnival of public utterance, as gossiping takes the form of overall and never-ending chains of talking and listening, thus putting gossip on the far side of the purely external qualities of rhetoric.’ (184)

Gossip, then, is the generator of concentric ‘imagined communities’ of various sizes within the spacetime of the text; it can also be seen as the controlling metaphor of the text’s concern with social memory and power. Put differently, gossip is often considered as a kind of anti-historiography by virtue of its organic form and subject-matter. *Byen og verden*, it can be argued, can be seen as an analogue of the real-world process by which eventemes are registered and re-told, on the synchronic and diachronic dimensions. Here, we return to the problematics of postmodern historiography, which are negotiated less explicitly by *Byen og verden*, a text which shuns the self-conscious ontological shifts between fact and fiction of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*. If Mads, the narrator of that novel, adopts the devices of magical realism to approach Danish national history from its margins, the narrators of *Byen og verden* negotiate their world within the discourses of their own *sensus communis*.

Gossip is, generally, a marginalised form of discourse. Although it can be disseminated in written form (the existence of tabloid newspapers, and of libel laws, bear witness to this possibility), it lives in the oral sphere, and reproduces itself in an organic fashion. Gossip draws its authority from its own decentered, unstable brand of ‘truth’, not from a spurious transcendent origin. Because of – not despite – these qualities, gossip is powerful; it constitutes the most binding form of social control imaginable. Although it is an un-privileged form of discourse, it is unhelpful to construe it as gendered. Sociological studies show that all-male and mixed groups



‘gossip’ about trivial and non-trivial subjects roughly as much as all-female groups (Dunbar 1996: 4, 123). Neither can it be said to belong purely to the private sphere, since gossip can bring down a government. To the extent that gossip is defined as such by its disregard for prevailing standards of objective truth and evenemential significance – i.e. its practitioners are ‘jarring witnesses’, dealing in doubtful veracity and trivial issues – it is an illegitimate form of historiography, alongside the folktale, the urban legend, and so on. As Holton points out, ‘the authority to narrate and the legitimacy of narration are inevitably tied to social and legal forms of authority and legitimacy’ (1994: 43); the dynamics of social marginalisation are bound up with those of narrative marginalisation (36). Nevertheless, gossip is a form of historiography insofar as it engages both with the everyday event and the event of national or international import, and links one to the other according to a culturally and historically contingent doxa: ‘common sense’.

In her critical study *Gossip* (1985), Patricia Meyer Spacks focuses on the realistic English novel as a literary form which borrows much from gossip as a social phenomenon, and tries to locate the positive power of both literature and gossip. In this sense her argument is eminently compatible with the Bakhtinian approach to the novel as heteroglossic; both see the novel as an arena of competition and jostling for power in which ‘the cognitive and ethical limits that bound the *sensus communis* may be affirmed, tested, transgressed or attacked’ (Holton 1994: 46). Spacks identifies three, quite fluid, varieties of gossip, all of which can be detected in *Byen og verden*. The first is distilled malice, the goal of which is to damage competitors and generate a sense of power. The young Ketty-Kristina Bang-Hansen’s appointment to the Katedralskole is denigrated by her older colleagues on this basis: ‘men så havde

frøken Bang-Hansen virket temmelig grøn, enedes man bagefter om, og egentlig kun fået stilling så frisk fra eksamensbordet fordi hun havde kristendomskundskab som bifag'(Hultberg 1998: 5). The ill-defined 'man' alluded to here as the authority on Ketty is also implicit in Spacks' second variety of gossip, idle talk, a kind of grooming, which nevertheless can solidify a group's identity by delineating 'outside' and 'inside'. Spacks observes that this kind of gossip 'reveals complacencies of groups in power, groups whose members, when they gather, feel no need to question themselves or their assumptions' (1985: 5). The questioning of hypocritical assumptions is often achieved in *Byen og verden*, however, by shifting between voices, and thus showing how groups are formed and deformed in thinking as well as in saying, as in XLVI:

'Det var næsten uappetitligt at se som familien Bundgaard formerede sig, kaniner mente fru fiskehandler Frede Gerning i et øjeblik oprethed skønt hun ellers ikke hørte til dem der tog sådanne udtryk i sin mund for slet ikke at tale om at nære slige tanker i sit sind, i hvert fald, det var umoralsk' (Hultberg 1998: 108)

Clearly, gossip involves synchronic and diachronic shifts: synchronic, because group membership and disjunctures between groups change depending on the identities and intentions of the interlocutors, and diachronic because gossip plays a role in the construction of 'place' by identifying events and thus imbuing sites with hi/stories.

The third variety of gossip is serious gossip, the kind of intimate, private talk that is 'a resource for the subordinated', for example, women analysing the wor(l)d of men (Spacks 1985:5). *Byen og verden* is occasionally shot through with voices that jar with bewilderment or outsidership, and often such voices are linked to a lack of words or means to describe their experience of the world. Herr og fru Naipur, for example, 'var

stumme når de skulle definere deres klagemål' (40) against their landlord, for the term 'racism' 'kendtes endnu ikke rigtigt'; one's identity or position in society can only be articulated through words, which the community at large is in charge of.

Critics have tended to emphasise the absence of an organising narrator in *Byen og verden*, but the polyphonic character of the novel can easily come to elide the tendency of some voices to dominate and, more importantly, to determine and delimit. As Erik Pelle points out, 'sproget sætter verdens grænser' (1993: 26). In *Byen og verden*,

'[h]andlinger og personer er anskuet udefra, fremstillet i fragmenter og vilkårlige spring gennem et helt århundrede, men i kraft af den bysladder der fører ordet og giver Viborg stemme alligevel fastholdt af en slags alvidende fortæller.' (ibid.)

This could even, Pelle suggests, be considered a 'juridisk roman' (27). After all, as Kamma Birk (text LV) discovers to her cost: 'der er også noget der hedder alment omdømme' (Hultberg 1992: 137). Pelle's identification of the narrating principle as 'alvidende bysladder' is suggestive of the 'existential discourse' that the Swedish historian Eva Österberg maintains is characteristic of the Old Icelandic sagas, where what men, women and children say is always meaningful: 'People are identified through what they say and they are identified *with* their speech. What is uttered cannot be lightly retracted, denied, or softened' (1991: 15). In this genre, language is not symbolic; it is an integral part of action (27). Furthermore, following Foucault (but not uncritically), Österberg maps out the meaning of silence, which can retard action, indicate suspicion, menace or ruminance. Silence, like speech, can, in a foucauldian framework, 'confirm, produce, and contain power'; silence and speech are both meaning-bearing and mutually dependent (10). She goes on to explain the

predominance of existential speech in the Icelandic sagas with the anthropological concept of ‘low-context society’, which describes socially and ethnically homogeneous communities where conflicting norms are unusual, and ‘people do not need to say much to understand each other, and they mean what they say’ (29-30). This is how Erik Bach-Christensen can manage to invite ‘mellem linjerne’ his best customers to his son’s christening, ‘for ligefrem invitere kunne man jo ikke’ (Hultberg 1998: 123).

Part of the contemporary fascination with the sagas is that we cannot understand fully either the utterances or the silences; not being members of this low-context society, we cannot grasp the meaning of what is not said. Similarly, as readers of *Byen og verden*, we are tantalisingly excluded from a perfect understanding of the silences between and beyond what is said. The judgements of the jury in *Byen og verden* are implicit, understated, incomplete, though the vocabulary used in them is often colourful.

Gossip is, then, a useful conceptual tool for mapping the textual community – the multiple interactions and shifting loyalties of characters, narrators and readers over time and in space. But equally crucial for *Byen og verden* is Wirth-Nesher’s emphasis on the contingency of ‘home’, which, in part, is mapped through the written and spoken word.

#### **2.4.3.2. Written features of the cityscape**

Street-names and shop-signs are the most easily identifiable verbal landmarks of the cityscape. In fact, street names are the only feature that can be shared by extratextual city, cartographic representation, and textual city, without the need for some form of

intersemiotic translation. While a simple map will not reveal the relative social status of habitations on, say, Aalborgvej and Sct Matthiasgade, the reader of a text or map can quickly ascertain that Aalborgvej, on the outskirts of the city, is likely to boast newer and perhaps more prestigious housing than the historic streets of the old medieval town, with their religious nomenclatures. Such knowledge is culturally and historically contingent: the same assumptions could not be made about English cities bombed during WWII, for example; and would a Los Angeleno be able to ‘read’ European cityscapes? Furthermore, the litany of saints’ names and the names of neighbouring towns on the map of Viborg weaves a historical and geographical *danskhed* into the fabric of the town; its roots and routes are mapped relative to those of Aalborg, Århus, Langå, and so on. Therefore, the reader of *Byen og verden*, like the tourist-flâneur in Viborg, is implicated in some kind of ingroup, whether *viborgsk*, *fydsk*, *dansk*, or just European.

Shop-signs are easier to fictionalise in text without corroding the bonds tying textual and extratextual city together, but they are also bearers of social memory and signifiers of socio-spatial differentiation. For Lorenz Bendixen, for example (text XIX), the painted testimony to his partnership in the local firm of solicitors is the culmination of a journey in time and space:

‘[...]da han var færdig flyttede han med sin mor væk fra Ærø, væk fra alt, til hovedlandet, til Viborg, hvor han takket være dygtighed og energi havde den triumf uvant hurtigt at se sit eget navn føjet til på de hvide glasplader i sagførerfirmaet Bruun og Küppers’ førstesalsvinduer i Vestergade, Bruun, Küppers og Bendixen, og hans mor [...] blot påpegede at ordene var skrevet så tæt sammen i det smalleste vindue at man næsten ikke kunne læse hvad der skulle stå.’ (37)

This is a city of shopkeepers, and the names of businesses speak of personal and familial alliances, feuds, and histories. The electric appliances firm Jørgensen & Jensen (LXXX) celebrates its 40-year jubilee long after the departure of Jensen, who had ‘givet op, ganske enkelt [...] men navnet havde han gudskelov ikke taget med sig’ (217). The issue of names is a complex one in this episode, for Jørgensen’s wife, Jytte, is given credit for her own contribution to the business and for their three children. Jørgensen appeals to a new-world tradition in justifying his eldest daughter’s remarkable name, Jytte II Toben:

‘når der er familier hvor et fædrene fornavn går i arv hvorfor skal det samme så ikke være tilfældet med et mødrene, er det for tidligt at skabe en tradition, og han tænkte på de amerikanske slægtninge, ganske vist langt ud, som havde romertal bag deres navne’ (217)

Such a quaint attitude stands in sharp contrast to the almost nameless women who populate this textual Viborg, whose downright comically complex married titles constitute a densely gendered linguistic practice. This same practice is a litany required to fix the complexities of genealogy in a graspable constellation.<sup>17</sup> The bearers of such titles are often aware of their import and, sometimes, seek to subvert it. Fru øjenlæge Carl Garland-Weber (52) pursues an education and academic career, regardless of the scorn of society: ‘hun selv så småt pønsede på fra øjenlægefrue at tage skridtet til gymnasielærer, advancement eller ikke i samfunds øjne’ (53). The Rabis children (LVII) are given nicknames according to this pattern by their scornful (but nevertheless prescient) father: ‘fru højesteretssagføreren, herr civilingeniøren, herr afholdshoteldirektøren, [...] og Ole blev altid med et grin herr grøftegraveren’

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<sup>17</sup> Its prevalence in the extratextual world extends even to a recent literary biography produced by Københavns Universitet, *Forfatterleksikon. Biografier* (2001), whose tendency to list the most inconsequential details of authors’ parents’ occupations has been noted by more than one reviewer.

(143). Prescient, for Ole, by this time re-christened Augusto, digs many ditches for his enemies as a war-lord in South America, and ends up in one himself. On the other hand, Paulette Børgesen-Olsen bears her father's name with particular pride (83), and two out of her three husbands remain nameless. The practice of naming might be said to constitute a kind of median category between writing and speaking; birth-names and marriage-names must be confirmed in writing, on a certificate whose institutional authority is given by church or state, but names given and used in practice are shifting and unpredictable. Here, again, we see the disjunction between the authority of state and that of social community.

#### **2.4.3.3. Auditory features of the cityscape**

The verbal environment is the field where the relation between textual and extratextual worlds is most tenuous and, yet, in its purest form. Wirth-Nesher maintains that the verbal environment encompasses both written and auditory aspects (13-14), and that language (dialect, sociolect, etc.) can act as 'auditory landmarks'. And yet the fundamentally unsatisfactory relationship between authentic spoken language varieties in the extratextual world and their representation in script in the text is not tackled. What is 'heard' by the reader of a text is qualitatively different from what is heard on a busy street, for example. In one sense, this relationship is analogous to that between what is 'seen' on a busy street and its representation in text; but, in a deeper sense, the representation of (spoken) language by (written) language awakens the kind of logocentric anxiety that was discussed towards the end of chapter 2. What is at stake in *Byen og verden* is not only the textual representation of 'auditory landmarks' (though these do have a role to play in temporal and spatial orientation within the Viborgverse), but also orality itself, and the (suit)ability of

writing to capture or engage with it. What are we to make of a novel that adopts ‘a highly sophisticated style in the guise of a *quasi-oral* tradition’ (van der Liet 1999: 215, my emphasis)? It seems not unreasonable to read the text as employing the vagaries and ‘hvide mellemrum’ of the oral genres (folktales, gossip, etc.) as a means of playing oral historical testimony off against written historical testimony, demonstrating that both perform badly.

It can be argued that *Byen og verden* fetishises the *play* of the signifier that is only evident in writing, thus subverting its own ‘lip-service’(!) to oral forms of language. For example, punctuation is sometimes attributed to reported speech: ‘men det vovede hun blot at antyde med en let tøven foran et imaginært komma’ (138). Jenny Frank is moved by the inscription on her psalm book to ponder on the necessity of context to make written language ‘mean’: ‘var der nogen så var det hende der vidste hvor meget man kan læse ind i et skriftens ord løsrevet fra dets sammenhæng, kontekstuel, filologisk, historisk, socialt, og for den sags skyld også dogmatisk’ (67). More iconic is the image of Simon Bundgaard tearing up his parents’ letters and throwing them into Nørresø at its deepest point (110-11), because they prove that his whole life has been based on a lie. The fragmented letters float away on the surface of the chaos of dark water, like the fragmented stories in this novel: ‘der var ikke tale om undrende at betragte papirlappernes sagte vuggen hen over søen’. Dr. Christian de Forchelet-Odon has also lived his life based on the literal meaning of some fateful letters, but discovers, at the end of it, that the written word is of less import than the artefacts preserved with the letters (46-7).



An interesting example of the ability of typographical instability to mimic that of the spoken word is the transformation of Olaf Marcussen to Oluf in the course of text LXXIX, despite his careful spelling of his surname – ‘Marcussen med ‘c’ (216) – on the telephone. There is anecdotal evidence that Hultberg was unaware of this change until alerted to it at a seminar,<sup>18</sup> and insisted that it was not deliberate. This presents us with an excellent example of a text producing meaning independently of authorial intention.

The Bakhtinian concept of ‘voice’ is therefore used here in with some reservations: the definition of the term *skaz* (in translation) is ‘stylization of the various forms of oral everyday narration’ (Bakhtin 1981: 262), rather suggestive of a written representation of auditory phenomena emanating from some kind of originary presence. Of course, this is not to say that a Bakhtinian approach to the text is anything other than fruitful, and a dual approach is not, I think, unsustainable.

Ping-Huang and van der Liet both consider *Byen og verden* an extreme example of Bakhtin's polyphonic novel:

‘The characters[...] do not appear before us only as fragments of, and mouthpiece for, the consciousness of the author, but come forward as individual voices within an arena of discourse where they confront, compete, and interact with one another’ (van der Liet 1999: 214)

This is well-founded: a close reading of any one of the texts in *Byen og verden* will reveal a constant flux of voices, sociolects, registers, and even addressees. In a different context, Cairns Craig has also made the salient point that such a textual strategy is not merely a matter of linguistic ‘grafting’ or ‘hybridisation’, but that the

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<sup>18</sup> Personal communication from Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, Hindsgavl, July 2002

‘use of languages in relation is the linguistic equivalent of a narrative that is a powerful enactment of “persons-in-relation”’ (1999: 91).

These examples are taken from text XVII (33-4):

‘der var sandelig fandens, eller pokker, til forskel’

‘de[...]besluttede at købe en ny blender når de kom hjem, den gamle duede ikke til brandade de morue, klipfisken blev hængende på indersiden’

‘De havde været gift i seks år og der kom stadig ikke børn, men på den anden side, hvem skulle også passe dem, Har du lyst til at være hjemmemand, og Lasse benægtede det, skønt i sit inderste indre, når sandt skal siges, men det er jo ikke altid at sandt skal siges.’

‘og endnu er hun naturligvis ikke blevet vinkender, men om føje år, som begge hendes forældres yndlingsudtryk lyder.’

‘Det som kaldes skæbnens ironi synes ikke at fungere for Ingrid og Lasses vedkommende, ellers skulle Ingrid vel have aborteret efter en madforgiftning eller lignede’

‘Så kom ikke og sig at tilværelsen er lutter tragik.’

This episode is particularly dense with regard to sociolect: the self-conscious use of ‘fandens’/ ‘pokker’ and ‘om føje år’, revealed here through *flagged* free indirect discourse (‘som hendes forældres yndlingsudtryk lyder’), is compounded by the terminological trappings of bourgeois culinary know-how (‘blender’, ‘brandade de morue’, ‘klipfisken’). The identity of the second person addressee shifts from Lasse (addressed by Ingrid) to the anonymous person addressed by the gossiping narrator. This is disorientating: is the person addressed by ‘kom nu ikke og sig’ a towns person, the reader, or both? In line with the double role of the PMR, we must assume that the text produces both a naïve reader ‘who keeps wondering which meaning to choose’ (Eco 1990: 55) and a critical one who is able to appreciate the ambiguity of

‘insiderness’ and ‘outsiderness’ constructed by the imperative form of the verb here, and, accordingly, to identify in a qualified way with the textual community. The textual conceit of gossip, then, is a way of thematising the relative and partial knowledge and participation of the reader.

#### **2.4.3.4. The spatial dimension of the verbal environment**

We are moving towards the spatial dimension of language. If language is an element of place, then it also implies spatial differentiation. In the passage discussed above, Ingrid works at Viborg Museum, and Lasse is ‘fuldmægtig på amtet’ (33). The negotiation of prospective parental roles is couched in spatial terms: ‘har du lyst til at være *hjemmand*’ (33, my emphasis). Equally, their geographical mobility is not threatened by Ingrid’s pregnancy precisely because of their social standing (they are well-off and educated, she is a liberated working woman, etc.): ‘Deres planer om at krydse gennem det græske øhav og det tyrkiske fastland på sporet af *A Book of Mediterranean Food* var på nippet til at gennemkrydses af Ingrid’s uformodede svangerskab’ (34). It will also be noted that their allegiance to Elizabeth David’s cookbooks sites them not only in a social elite but also temporally/historically.

The process of constructing ingroups and outgroups is partly accomplished (though never completed) by sociolectal differences, which imply geographical and social distance and, by extension, national belonging; the (mother)-tongue is the site where Viborg and Denmark as imagined communities can most clearly be seen to coalesce.

The Viborgers’ attitude to the Copenhagen accent is an ambivalent one. ‘Det udanske’ is often conflated with ‘det københavnske’. There is a distinct sense of superiority on

the part of the Jutlanders, which occasionally receives support from Copenhageners of a certain social standing. Fru Nicolaisen, for example, is delighted that the Viborgers pronounce her surname more carefully, and muses that this is due to a certain social reverence on their part:

‘Sigrid Nicolaisens smerte over hendes bopæls dunkle uværdighed [dulmedes] ved tanken om at hun endelig var undsluppet hovedstadens endnu uværdigere udtale, Nikkelejsen, af hendes tilgifte efternavn, ja hendes hjerte formelig løftedes ved at høre det udtalt med jydsk bogstavstro, for slet ikke at tale om når der ærefrygtigt lagdes tryk på første stavelse’ (162)

It is rare for dialect or accent to be ‘shown’ in this way (‘Nikkelejsen’) rather than ‘told’; another example is the incomprehensible drunken ramblings of Hans Erik Bundgaard (109). Elsewhere, a Copenhagen accent automatically meets with suspicion, especially when other slight deviations from the social norm are involved. For example, Teodor Simonsen-Schmidt marries an older woman: ‘Hendes accent havde i ægteskabets første år et islæt af københavnsk, og rygter opstod og rygter døde hen’ (72).

Knowledge of a foreign language – and of course there is a hierarchy of foreign languages – can represent education and in some cases superior social standing. However, when a character’s native tongue, or even accent, seems to be threatened by foreign linguistic influences, the moral fibre or cultural authenticity of the speaker is also considered to be under threat. Kyra Pedersen’s story (LIV) illustrates this ambivalent attitude better than any other. Kyra was a refugee of Stalin’s purges, generally accepted in Viborg because ‘i og for sig levede hun jo stille og gjorde ingen nogen fortræd’ and because ‘ingen *udenbys fra* ville have studset over Kyra Pedersens fremtoning’ (135, my emphasis). When the townspeople discover that she speaks

fluent French, having had a lycée education as the daughter of a Russian nobleman, aspiring Francophiles in Viborg begin to take French lessons from her. Fru landsdommer Eriksholt aspires to the position of President of the local branch of *l'Alliance française*, and fears that Kyra's French may be tainted by traces of a less prestigious culture: 'Omend fru landsdommer Eriksholt [...] frygtede at hendes franske, i sammenligning med frøken Lynggårds, ved Kyra Pedersens mellemkomst skulle have fået et let baltisk, for ikke direkte at sige judeo-baltisk anstrøg' (136).

Those residents of Viborg who are unfortunate enough to speak Danish with some kind of German accent are worse off. Irma Jensen from Vienna has an 'udpræget udansk accent [...] som var hun ikke helt en af vore' (159). That her accent is also said to be marked by her adoptive parents' 'exilkøbenhavnske 's'-er' (159) calls into question exactly how a 'foreign' accent is to be judged – does the epithet 'udansk' also signify every deviation from the 'viborgske' norm?

The narrative structure of the novel also allows for turns of phrase emanating from the capital to be absorbed into the narrative, and thus into the Viborg dialect, over time. This can be employed to indicate the placing of a particular episode in historical time. For example, a dialectal novelty is explicitly explained as coming from Copenhagen in LXVI: 'var hun lige ved at gå op i en spids, som de siger i København' (167). It is then used again, without comment, by the narrator in the same chapter to indicate a return to the 'present' after recounting an event which had taken place in the same house some years previously (170), indicating the normalisation and assimilation of the expression over time.

Those who betray their mother-tongue of their own volition are guilty of the worst kind of treason. Eli, natural father of Hans Fielke, does not escape criticism for this along with his other considerable crimes. For all Eli's sophistication, his ability to help Bodil with some colloquialisms in her English textbooks, he has forgotten some of his Danish: 'sit lidt rustne modersmål' (279). For Marie-Luise Nielsen (XLVIII), who elopes to Germany with an older man from Hamburg, learning a new language represents a greater liberation than the mere fact of physical distance from her native land: 'hun forstod at det nye og forunderlige som hun var blevet indviet i ville hun evigt være formælet med' (120). Marie-Luise agrees a bizarre compromise whereby she spends half the year in Viborg with her mother, and half the year in Hamburg with her new husband. After the Nazi invasion of Denmark, she becomes known as 'tyskerkællingen', and although her husband has had to seek exile in Sweden, she is condemned by Viborg for her wealth, which is of German origin, as well as her accent: 'der havde sneget sig en svag accent ind i hendes *Viborgmål*' (121) (my emphasis). Here, again, the boundary between authentic Viborg and authentic Danish is hazy.

### 3. *Verden*: global space

The town, then, is only half of the story. The ambiguous syntax of the title *Byen og verden* suggests a doubled urban space: the town as world, and the town in the world. This is reminiscent of the papal address *urbi et orbi* – the city and the world – and the corresponding ingroup and outgroup of *urbs* and *pagus*, stemming from Antiquity. The working title of *Byen og verden* is said to have been *Fjernt fra Viborg* (Pelle 1993), which indicates how essential movement between Viborg and the outside world is, both thematically and structurally. This section explores the ambiguous

space of the textual Viborg as town and world as concentrically arranged and shifting spaces. This textual universe speaks both to our imagining of the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ in the late twentieth century, a dialectic in which the nation is profoundly implicated, and to our understanding of the very notion of ‘community’ as rooted in anthropological place. From the perplexity of urban space, then, we move to a concern with the *pagus* that surrounds and co-mingles with it.

### 3.1. Global, local and ‘glocal’ space

Arjun Appadurai has been one of the leading theorists of the global cultural economy of the late twentieth century. He argues that disjunctures between economy, culture and politics (or polities) is resulting in an order that can best be described as a disorder of overlapping, fluid and perspectival ‘scapes’: ethnoscapescapes, mediascapescapes, technoscapescapes, finanscapescapes and ideoscapescapes (1999: 221). After Benedict Anderson, Appadurai proposes ‘imagined worlds’, constructed in a fashion analogous to ‘imagined communities’. The imagined worlds of groups in power, and the associated ‘stabilities’ of kinship, nation, and so on, are interwoven with the instabilities engendered by ‘money, commodities and persons [...] ceaselessly chasing each other round the world’ (226). Homing in on the effect of this global game of tag on the identity of subjects, he begins to theorise the ‘glocal’:

‘the central feature of global culture today is the politics of the mutual effect of sameness and difference to cannibalize one another and thus to proclaim their successful hijacking of the twin Enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular.’ (229-30)

The polarisation of ‘local’ and ‘global’ is, ironically, still implicit in this important attempt to show their interrelationship. In his useful essay ‘The Space of Culture, the

Power of Space' (1996), Lawrence Grossberg argues that attempts to map new conditions of cultural globalisation have rested on the assumption that the associated phenomena are played out in space: the local-versus-global paradigm, for example, has usually been equated with place-versus-space (Grossberg 1996: 173), where local 'place' is replete with meaning and identification, and global 'space' is empty, the container for movement between places. The parallels with de Certeau and Lefebvre's attacks on the idea of space as an empty container are obvious. Foucault, too, in a sense anticipates the spatial problematic of 'globalisation', when he recognises the spatial dimension of demography:

'The problem of the human site or living space is not simply that of knowing whether there will be enough space for men in the world [...] but also that of knowing what relations of propinquity, what type of storage, circulation, marking, and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation in order to achieve a given end.' (1998: 176-7)

Global space, too, is not an empty container for a homogeneous and infinitely expanding humankind, but a network of relations, as Grossberg underlines when he observes: 'one can belong to the global as a place just as one can belong to the local as a space' (1996: 185). Echoing Beverley Allen's observation (1995) about ethno-national identity as a unit of exchange on a global commodity market, Grossberg points to the saturation of politics by discourses of identity and difference, and warns of a 'fetishisation of the local' (176) in politics and culture. Locality, he reminds us, is variously and hierarchically defined across the scale from the personal, through neighbourhood, city, nation and world; but difference is today in the service of capital. Appadurai's emphasis on ethnoscaapes is symptomatic of this, Grossberg argues. Is the 'local' an authentic site of struggle, or merely an expression of the subsidiarity principle inherent in a globally-pervasive politics of recognition?



Grossberg sees the futility of attempting to rent asunder time and space, and implicates a historical perspective in his call for a philosophical project on contemporary space in which space is not merely a supplementary dimension of study that renders history local and narratively disjointed, but where history itself is spatialised (179). Here, we catch the echo of Foucault's description of our understanding of life as 'a network that connects points and weaves its skein' (1998: 175), as well as Walter Benjamin's historian, who

'grasps the *constellation* which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the "time of the now" which is shot through with chips of Messianic time' (1999: 255, my emphasis).

Grossberg's observations about our currently weak grasp of the twin trajectories of the 'global' and 'local' in the contemporary world provide a way in to the text-town of Viborg, which occupies at once various stations in the hierarchy of the local and global.

It will be remembered that Allen's definition of the 'postnational' novel rests not only on advanced print capitalism and the consequent impulse to recognise the 'locations of its readers' (1995: 104), but also on the relative spatial 'positioning and repositioning' of characters, and the problematisation of identities based on the differences of place and nation (101). The other side of the coin, local literature, which, naturally, pre-dates national literature, tends to locate a 'total world vision *in the local*' (109, emphasis in original). The two are not necessarily mutually antagonistic (93-4). But it seems insufficient to place *Byen og verden* in the second category of the 'local' novel, for its thematising of local difference, and its

superposing of the local upon the national and upon the global seems more self-reflexive than is allowed for even by Allen's suggestion that local literature is a 'local virus' that weakens the nation-state and national literary canon from within. *Byen og verden* also virally weakens the very idea of *local* identity by constructing a field of concentric circles rather than tectonic plates of difference.

We are coming close to a 'double-space' of the nation which will be developed below in the discussion of Viborg's positioning in – and as – the nation and the world. This is suggestive of the double perspective which, in the context of Scottish literature, has been described thus by Cairns Craig:

'Those disjunctive spatial relations are caught in [Alasdair] Gray's Lanark, when Thaw, in Glasgow, looks out at the Kilpatrick hills, "with the clear distant top of Ben Lomond behind the eastward slope. Thaw thought it queer that a man on that summit, surrounded by the highlands and overlooking deep lochs, might see with a telescope this kitchen window, a speck of light in a low haze to the south" (Gray 1981: 287); a double perspective - within history, without history - which is driven by the spatial conjunction, and cultural and historical disjunction, of Lowland and Highland space, of national and imperial narratives' (Craig 1999: 239)

Without stretching the analogy between Danish and Scottish history and geography too far, it is possible to read in this passage the essence of the double perspective on Viborg life that *Byen og verden* catches, the tension between provincial, metropolitan and exilic Danishness with which the shifting narrative vibrates.

### **3.2. The portrayal of *verden***

As far as Viborg is concerned, the 'foreign' begins outside the city walls. But just as there are degrees of spatial/physical distance from the town, so too is there a hierarchy of 'foreignness'. The foreign is gradable as well as absolute. Moreover, foreign

culture can represent something to aspire to – clothes, wealth, prestigious languages – as well as something to scorn. This ambivalence, of course, faithfully reflects the way in which societies define themselves: by being what the others are not.

### 3.2.1. Foreignness

This hierarchy of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ foreigners is fairly predictable. Germans come off worst; hostility reaches its peak during the occupation and immediately post-war, and is much less virulent when the narrative reaches the present-day. The cruellest anti-German treatment is reserved for Danes who have been tainted by their connections to Germans or to Germany. Marie-Luise Döhle, née Nielsen (XLVIII), elopes to Hamburg but spends half the year in Viborg with her mother. This eccentric arrangement results in nothing more than some mischievous teasing, her house being labelled ‘jomfruburet’. After the invasion, however, she is known as ‘tyskerkællingen’ (121), and a later chapter (LXVI) hints that her untimely death may have been suicide, a result of continuous threats and attacks on her home: ‘de ville komme efter hende, Marie-Luise vidste det, og aldrig havde hun gjort nogen noget, men forsmædelige trusler havde der været nok af [...] så hun valgte’ (169). Ole Fröhlich, meanwhile, is the issue of a Danish girl and a German soldier, and is called ‘tyskerunge’ at school (IX,19). Herr og fru Simonsen-Schmidt (XXXIII) are originally from Southern Jutland, disputed German lands, and this is enough to make them feel like foreigners in Viborg (although exactly when their story is set is unclear): ‘heroppe, så langt væk, og trods Genforeningen, de vidste hvor deres rødder var’ (71). Interestingly, the narrator uses a word here to describe someone who has *become* German: the family in Kiel are said to be ‘helt fortyskede’ (71). There are

also class-based degrees of Germanness. For example, Johannes Jensen Bitsch is described as ‘af kartoffeltysk stamning’ (149).

The status of Swedes is clarified by one Viborger in 1945: ‘skønt svenskere jo ikke just er noget man samler på, bedre end tyskere var de vel i grunden’ (169). Elsewhere, the old truism about Danes becoming Scandinavians when they are outside Scandinavia seems to be supported by the narrator in XXXVIII: Paulette elopes with a young Berber man in Tunisia, and he is described as having won ‘en skandinav med i tilgift’ (85).

Most of the world seems to be classified in quite an abstract fashion as ‘syden’, the South, which signifies more an interchangeable assortment of concepts such as ‘hot weather’ and ‘danger’ rather than any particular cultural features. This is apparent in the discourse of holiday-makers, for example, Ester and Anders Tougaard find that Mallorca is unbearably hot: ‘det var jo temmelig varmt dernede men sådan er syden nu engang’ (154). When a sauna is installed in Estrid Kløjgaard’s villa by a visiting Frenchman, southern (and Finnish) practices are the subject of innuendo: ‘det er vel mere end sandsynligt at den er blevet installeret ikke alene efter finske men også mediterrane principper’ (132).

Physical appearance is also used as an indicator of ‘foreignness’, regardless of the actual national origins of the individual. Aage Briggs is of English descent on his father’s side, but is described as having ‘noget næsten sydlandsk’ about him (38). This seems to refer to his physical appearance, which is exotic enough for his female pupils to fall in love with him. More telling is fru Lygum’s reaction to a visit by her

daughter-in-law's brother (LII). She has never accepted her French daughter-in-law, Lydia, so when tall, blond, blue-eyed Jean-François arrives, she is astonished that he resembles 'en af vore' (130). She had been equally astonished when her granddaughter, despite her 'højest besynderligt' name, had blue eyes (XXXVI, 79), and had been glad that no-one could tell that Lydia was French just by looking at her (79).

While Lydia Lygum is referred to as a 'bondepige', Frenchness is sometimes associated with social refinement, as the story of Christian de Forchelet-Odon shows. His origins are described thus: 'han var af bedste familie, ja mere end bedste, det var fransk adel' (XXIII, 44), and it is said that he could trace his ancestry back to Charlemagne's knights. Christian is poor, but keeps up appearances, and thus attains a strong position in Viborg Society as an academic. Again, a particular cultural origin can be represented by stereotypes at both ends of the social scale.

The most comprehensive portrayal of 'otherness', however, is reserved for Copenhageners. This illustrates the concept of a hierarchy of belonging or community: 'det danske' seems often to be conflated with 'det viborgske', and the boundaries of these two categories are blurred. In *Byen og verden*, the concepts of 'det danske' and 'det udanske' are effectively deconstructed through the application of such terms to a wide selection of practices and things, and they seem to be used largely to express approval or disapproval on the part of the narrator(s). In XLV, for example, a merger of two Australian-based companies run by two of Viborg's sons is dismissed as 'disse uden tvivl mafiose og mørkets gerninger, eller i hvert fald pågående omverdensfjendske udanske karteldannelser' (108). We know that this

disapproval is based not only on the *jantelov*, but also on the status of the two men as illegitimate and disowned by their respective families. The much more trivial practice of greeting by kissing on both cheeks is also condemned: ‘det er udansk det med at kysse paa kind’ (36).

### 3.2.2. Travel

Practices which are associated with Copenhagen and are thus foreign to Viborgers are manifold. Geographical distance is equated with cultural distance, and distance is also relative to social class: those lower down the social scale, for whom travel opportunities are limited, will think of the capital as much further away. This is made explicit when Christine Nielsen is about to retrieve her daughter from Hamburg: ‘Ganske vist var tanken om Hamborg hende i sin fjernhed lige saa grufuld som tanken om København’ (118). Even in Mallorca, when the Tougaards meet a couple from Copenhagen, they are referred to as coming ‘helt derovre fra’ (155). In fact, this particular couple are grudgingly described as being ‘i grunden ganske tiltalende mennesker’ (155) *despite* their origins. In the same way, Irma Jensen’s foster parents are an exception to the rule about Copenhageners and their exploitation of Jutland: ‘de skulle vel ikke som alle kobenhavnere direkte pønse paa at udnytte jydernes fornemste kvaliteter’ (160). The parents of Viborgers who go to the capital for an education are all too aware of the distance (‘hovedstadens farer og forlokkelser’) and the students themselves feel foreign ‘derovre i det besynderlige fjerne’ (104). The distance works both ways: Copenhageners can be just as critical of their new home, although the distance from the capital to the provinces is mostly perceived as social: Viborg is described as ‘denne eftertragtede midtjyske enklave’ by fru Kløjgaard

(131), a judgement which is made not only against the background of Copenhagen but also of Brussels, where her husband spends his working week.

The divisions are not as simple as capital versus provinces, for incomers to Viborg from other parts of Denmark do not escape criticism either. Lorens Hans Levy's mistress in Copenhagen thinks of Viborg - and, by association, her rival, fru Levy - as 'det stive, konventionelle, snobbede og dertil provinsielle Viborg, bare navnet gav hende gaasehud' (XL, 89). Vibeke Petersen's family are originally from Fyn, and her 'otherness' is demonstrated chiefly by the way she prepares food. Vibeke's habits are compared to what is served 'i normale hjem' (20), a telling choice of adjective. As a counterpoint to this, it is interesting to note that there is some awareness among the Danes of the stereotypes which signify 'Danishness' to the rest of the world: it is remarked that the Frenchman, Jean-Francois, comes to visit because 'det var[...]landet hvor isbjornene havde taender af diamanter og poter beslaaet med guld der havde lokket ham' (130). And when the Bundgaard brothers move to Slagelse to find work, we catch a glimpse of Slagelse-speak: 'øboerne lod dem alligevel i fred, sådan er jyderne nu engang' (109).

As the century progresses, travel becomes available to more and more sectors of society. In LXI, købmand Tougaard and his wife have worked hard all their lives and, as a sixtieth birthday present, their children pay for them to fly to Mallorca. The perceived decadence of the package tour is immediately contrasted with the reluctance of the couple to close their shop for two weeks, and its sophistication with their continual failure to comprehend exactly what a beach holiday entails. In fact, this holiday serves as a veritable inventory of 'otherness' for an archetypal Viborger.

The mores of the Copenhageners they meet are just as foreign as those of the other tourists; even a married couple of the Tougaards' own age swear and drink too much for their liking. Thus the cultural distance between Viborg and Copenhagen ('de var helt derovre fra' (155)) has not been compromised by the physical distance of both couples from their native country. The historic town of Palma is spurned by these good Viborg lutherans because of 'alt det katolske udenoms' (155). Finally, the youth and social origins of the tour guide, a young girl from Copenhagen with a 'snobbet efternavn' (154), represent the antithesis of everything the Tougaards are.

Interestingly, the tour guide addresses the Tougaards using the 'De' form to indicate respect on the basis of age. They themselves, on the other hand, use the 'De' form to indicate respect for their social superiors in Viborg – yet another indication of how cultural practices can vary according to social factors such as age and class, as well as according to geographical distance.

Viborg, in one sense, constitutes the world for its townspeople. In another sense, though, Viborg would cease to exist without the other that defines its identity. An awareness of identity as *Vi*-borgers is based on an ongoing comparison with the cultural norms elsewhere in Denmark, just as identity as Danes is based on a comparison with the (perceived) cultural *mores* of other parts of the world. When defining the foreign, difference as ethnoscape is just as significant as geographical distance, which is largely relative and contingent. The PMR constructed within *Byen og verden* experiences herself as fragmented and liminal, since her regional affiliations and practices shift between ingroup and outgroup from one text to the next.



### 3.2.3. Viborg as the centre of the world

In *Byen og verden*, physical movement from one place to another is usually associated with progress (social or professional). But this progress can, and often does, lead to a downfall of some kind, often a fatal accident, often implicitly presented as the result of exposure to the decadence of a different culture. In a sense, this is almost a subversion of the *Bildungsroman* tradition, in which an individual from the provinces goes to the city to seek his or her fortune. In *Byen og verden*, interaction with the big city, and/or the outside world, does not bring enduring social advancement and spiritual development; instead it results in unfortunate consequences both for the individual and sometimes for the town as a whole or for the nation. How ‘unfortunate’ these consequences are judged to be depends, of course, on the verdict of Viborg, its townsfolk and its newspapers.

While the most dramatic successes, failures and events are seen to happen elsewhere, Viborg is portrayed as the hub of world affairs in the sense that the protagonists start their journey in Viborg. Events are reported back to the town, by telegram, letter or on the grapevine, and people’s lives evaluated not on the basis of their achievements but on the basis of the effects of their actions on their remaining family, for example, or on how ‘udansk’ their behaviour is judged to have been.

Text XXXVIII – perhaps the key chapter in *Byen og verden* in terms of relativisation of Viborg and the outside world – tells the tale of a doctor’s daughter who marries two doctors in succession at a relatively young age. For their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, she and her second husband fly to Tunisia: ‘lidt sol, tre uger, og til Tunis’ (85), a holiday which seems to be an unremarkable package deal, until Paulette’s

disappearance. At home, she is assumed dead, and the investigation leads to headlines ‘ikke uden racistiske islæt’ (85); the barbarous citizens of the African state are held responsible for the death of an innocent European holiday-maker. However, we are told that she has in fact engineered her own disappearance together with a young Berber carpet seller to a remote village (‘berberbjerglandsby’ (85)). The (omniscient?) narrator informs us that Paulette is still alive, and that she is happy in her new life; she has been accepted by the Berber villagers. Here, again, the relative ‘openness’ of place or physical environment is related to social ‘openness’: ‘kan hun undre sig over om de snævre bjergboere dog ikke har vist mere åbenhed end mange mennesker født ved den åbne strand’. Viborg is shown relative to another town in the developing world, in a country which exists only for the people of Viborg as a sunny holiday destination, where people live in a very different natural environment, but where society functions in a similar fashion: the position of an individual within a society is determined by the collective will and *mores* of that society. Moreover, the physical differences between the two settlements throw into sharp relief the social similarities. Paulette’s subservient position as a woman in her new life is made clear, but the implicit comparison with Viborg leads us to wonder whether the position of women in the two societies differs greatly. This is the only episode in *Byen og verden* which discusses a ‘foreign’ society, not as a object of the Viborgianers’ attitudes, but as a comparable society in its own right. Paulette, assumed to be dead in her native town, has effectively been transplanted into another culture, so a tiny piece of the Viborg collective consciousness lives on elsewhere and in a sense subjectifies a part of the outside world, the Other.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of foreign travel having disastrous consequences is the incredible tale of the sons of Bodil and Anders Christian Fielke (XLV). Bodil and Anders Christian are obliged to marry after they return from University in Copenhagen because Bodil is pregnant. The influence of the capital in this unfortunate event is cited: 'men hovedstaden havde trods alt bevirket at Bodil på dette tidspunkt var i femte måned' (105). Their two sons, Hans and Erik, decide to travel after completing their education, and in fact they go further, geographically speaking, than anyone else in the novel: 'verden var deres, sammen ville de udforske den...de valgte Australien, et år til at arbejde sig hele kontinentet rundt langs kysten og derefter som belønning det indre af landet' (106). In a terrible accident, apparently foreseen by his brother, Erik is killed and partially eaten by a crocodile. Naturally, he is flown back to his native land and buried in 'den fædrene familiegrav' (106). Hans stays in Australia and builds up a successful business, whereupon he is tricked into meeting his natural father by his vengeful family. This particular story is fleshed out later in the novel in text XCVII, where we learn that Hans' natural father is probably also the illegitimate son of his paternal grandfather. We see him through Bodil's eyes as having all the sophistication of one who has seen the world: 'var det det der kaldtes verdensmanerer, hans væsen, hans måde at klæde sig på, hans lette tøj' (278). He is the serpent who reveals Bodil's own sexuality to her, forcing her to tempt Anders into a sexual relationship and thus legitimise her pregnancy. A final, overtly Biblical, symbol of the sin of the male line in this family is a birthmark on the forehead. The outside world is imagined as corrupting, and the outside world begins in Copenhagen; this particular tangled web is an extreme case of corruption.

#### 4. *Teksten: literary space*

Following Tygstrup, what is at stake here is not only the imaginary space of places and worlds, but '[d]en fortløbende strukturering af teksten [som] bliver en fortløbende produktion af rumlighed, ikke en fremstilling af rum, men en produktion af relationer, som har en rumlig karakter' (1999: 41). Textual space cannot exist without the subjective conception or experience of space; put differently, there is no point to one without the other. Describing space, says Tygstrup, is actually 'blandt de *mindst* betydningsfulde måder at fremstille rum på i litteraturen' (47, my emphasis). This section returns to a more abstract consideration of textual spacetime, trying to view it first through Bakhtín's looking glass, and then going on to assess Jan Kjærstad's interpretation of the novel as *feltroman*, before suggesting two alternative ways to conceptualise the textual space of *Byen og verden* that merge the spatial referent of the text – the historical palimpsest of the Viborgverse – with the structure of the text itself: de Certeau's rhetoric of walking, and Foucault's heterotopia of the museum.

##### 4.1. **Chronotopes**

Tygstrup's assessment of Bakhtín's chronotope is that it is meant to capture the essential relationship between lived and literary space, and has little to do with the space ostensibly described by the text: 'rummets betydning for det litterære billede og den litterære erfaring har ingen relation til omfanget af det beskrevne rum i en tekst' (1999: 47). Thus he approaches a characteristic of Bakhtín's discussion of the chronotope that its users frequently bewail: it is ill-defined. Or, rather, it is hard systematically to pin-point the distinction between the chronotope and a literary motif, or *topos* (van der Liet 1999: 209). The most oft-quoted passage from *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel* is, it will be remembered,

‘in the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history’ (1981: 84)

Assuming a minimal definition of the chronotope, that it conceptualises a *topos* which has a significant relationship to the time of the narrative, and that chronotopes are mutually defining through their difference, we may posit an over-riding chronotope of *Byen og verden* that is a spacetime of concentric circles of historical and ‘glocal’ belonging, proper to the late twentieth-century Danish genre of ‘implosion og eksplosion’ identified by Skyum-Nielsen (2000: 39-40). However, Bakhtin insists that numerous chronotopes can co-exist in one work, and that one of them may or may not dominate the others:

‘Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships.’ (1981: 252)

Each of the hundred texts can boast its own chronotope, for each has a different temporal and spatial scope and pace. Though the stories span the twentieth century, I want to suggest that the more dominant chronotopes are strikingly late-century. Some examples follow.

Wirth-Nesher's typology of urban environments does not satisfactorily take into account the things that surround us; the everyday objects that clutter up and nevertheless enrich a life. Many of the texts in *Byen og verden* have as their central icons artefacts that are *loci* of individual or collective memory and thus contribute to the construction of a place and to the sense of the tension between the passage of time

and the transcendence of time through the persistence of presence in space. This paradox is the same as that tackled in the Mørkhøj chapter of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, and tropes of fading, deterioration and physical persistence and transformation are common to the relevant sections of both novels.

Text XXXII is interesting for its blatant rendering of palimpsest of time and place through the medium of photography. Ane-Marie of the Høgild-Brock family, who is, in the tradition of the *jantelov*, a historian ‘lige så internationalt kendt som nationalt miskendt’ (70), returns to Viborg to visit her old family villa on Aalborgvej. Here, the building is mediated through family memory, as frozen in a photograph repeatedly alluded to by the narrator:

‘hun opsporede villaen på Aalborgvej, identificerede den efter billedet fra 1917, i årtier havde den været landsdommerhjem og var på det sidste blevet solgt til en offentlig institution, så porten til haven var blevet taget ned og hun kunne liste sig ind og se trappen hvor hendes mor en gang var blevet fotograferet sammen med hele familien og med hende på armen. Ane-Marie gjorde front mod hus og veranda, løftede hånden, en vinkende gestus, smil til fotografen hviskede hun skælmsk hen for sig, og hun smilte, men ingen fortrak deres alvorligt dystre miner, så hun vendte hovedet og begravede ansigtet dybt ned i sin mors hals.’

Photography is exceptional for its ability to (ostensibly) freeze a moment in time, returning a slice of spacetime for all eternity to the presence of the viewer; this is what Ane-Marie seems to step into here. Walter Benjamin was aware of the dual role of photography: medium for a ‘cult of remembrance of loved ones’ as well as ‘standard evidence for historical occurrences’. Nevertheless, the possibility of mechanical reproduction of a photograph diminishes the first role (1999: 219-20). The photograph of Peter Jensen’s absent father, for example, has been enlarged so many times that it has begun to resemble a painting (Hultberg 1998: 48). This is why the chronotope of

the photograph defines itself against that of other artefacts of memory, such as the trinket box in LXXXIII, which, in a concrete fashion, *contains* the past, but not the remembered or expected past:

‘så åbnede han den, nysgerrig efter at genopleve sin barndoms benovede undren og konstatere om det nu virkelig kunne være sandt, det med hans fars lysblonde hår, for altså næsten firs år siden. Han fandt ikke den lok som i hans erindring, magtfuldt, i en spændstig bue, havde dækket dåsens bund. I stedet lå der en besynderlig brunrød tingest’ (Hultberg 1992: 229)

A third example is Jonna Rabis’ Confirmation ring, stolen years earlier from her sister, and the historical reason for her exile and unhappy marriage (LXXXIX). Jonna finds this when clearing out the family home, and this material leftover from another time and place becomes a catalyst for a coming-to-terms with her life:

‘hvornar havde hun sidst set den, hun huskede den i grunden næppe, fattede ikke hvorledes den kunne have fulgt hende, haft så stor betydning for hendes liv, og så have forputtet sig her’ (251)

Reading as a practice of memory will be discussed in more depth in chapter 4; suffice it to say for the moment that the engagement with history incited by the artefacts in these examples, each of which has a particular relationship to history, time and space, is bound up with a contemporary readerly expectation. This is described by Middleton and Woods as ‘a prevalent politics of history in public culture which also relies on memory as the mediator between past and present’ (2000: 1)

An important feature is that the hi/stories in *Byen og verden* are not hermetically sealed; the import of an event in one spacetime can affect, or infect, that of another. The postmodern chronotope of the (malignant) network and virus becomes more poignant in the later episodes, as the world becomes smaller, or more global.

Viborg, gradually, is integrated into a global system of exchanges of messages and movements. In XV, another pivotal text in the novel, Niels Asmus Larsen's meteoric rise from Viborg Katedralskole to the dizzy heights of academe involves regular research trips to the USA. Again, we see the traveller, the cosmopolitan, returning to the motherland and bringing with him not only an infusion of new critical ideas but also a deadly infection: he contracts HIV/AIDS in New York and introduces the disease into Denmark. The conflation of knowledge and disease as both penetrating and proliferating establishes a chronotope that goes beyond the journey out, or *Bildungsroman*. This is more of a chronotope of virulence and metastasis (Baudrillard 1994a, passim), where the chronological causality, like the infection – be it HIV, art, or ideas – is untraceable, and can jump, in the present case, from one text to another, through time and over space.

In the case of Ole Rabis (herr Grøftegraveren) (LVII), his escape from a poor and violent family home as a sailor and eventual career as a terrorist leader forges another, more deterministic link between Viborg and the outside world. What happens in Viborg affects the conduct of its prodigal sons, and thus determines the lives and deaths of people on the other side of the world: 'når man hele livet igennem er blevet tævet så findes der altid nogen man selv kan tæve' (144). And Aase Villadsen in XXV makes a work of art – 'menneskelige dokumenter' (52) – out of the simultaneous postage of her partner's ashes to their friends all over the world. As well as virulence, these cases lead us to think of Chaos Theory, whose workings in history's spacetime are discussed by Søren Mørch (1996: 521-33), and picked up again in the Conclusion to this study.



The foreign package holiday in the sun is a recurring chronotope in *Byen og verden*. In earlier city novels, the railway is a trope representing social as well as spatial movement. The package holiday is somewhat less romantic, representing the coming of consumerism and the mass-market holiday, and as such implies the end of the exclusivity of foreign travel (when Marie-Luise goes to Hamburg in the late 1930s, having a passport is still seen as a terribly modern thing for a young girl to possess (XLVIII)). This type of holiday is not seen as ‘travelling’ in the widest sense; it is a ‘quick fix’, an anniversary or birthday present, an escape to the sunshine, time out of time, place out of space. When adjunkt Roslev wishes to save his marriage, he books a holiday in Crete. The island is effectively objectified, in quasi-colonial terms, its ancient culture just as much of a commodity as its beaches: ‘Kreta der lige var blevet opdaget som rejsemål, fru Sjørup elskede at ligge ved stranden og selv havde han altid haft en svaghed for den minoiske kultur’ (30). However, any foreign – or more precisely ‘southern’ - culture is usually experienced only through the marketing of organised day-trips to the universal ‘hyggelige typiske lille landsby i bjergene’ (155). The destination of the package holiday is therefore a ‘non-place’.

Nevertheless, we are reminded, in LXVII, that the package holiday-maker is never immune to the peril ever-present in southern climes: Magdalene Mosebach meets her maker ‘i den forfærdelige flyulykke på tilbagerejsen fra et fjernt og for så vidt anstændigt charterferiemål [...] var der i virkeligheden ikke noget der hed Nemesis og kunne denne Nattens datter ikke også antage terroristers og muselmænds skikkelse’ (175). This chronotope is bound up with an exit from time, whether in death or disappearance (see also Paulette Børgesen-Olsen’s story, above). This chronotope,

like the previous one, is inextricably bound up with the space and time of the modern nation, or, more precisely, with the increasing permeability of its boundaries.

Bart Keunen succinctly accuses Bakhtin of only succeeding in illustrating ‘the interwovenness of time and space’ (2000: 2). We have seen a number of ways in which the texts of *Byen og verden* thematise this interwovenness. To this extent it is possible to counter accusations of Bakhtin’s under-determination of the chronotope by pointing to the relatively strong or weak sense of this relationship in various novels, in the same way as some novels deserve the accolade ‘polyphonic’ rather more than others. However, in privileging the interwovenness of time and space, the concept of the chronotope tends not to reveal the mythic and anthropological potentialities of space *per se*, and their negotiation in text.

#### **4.2. The *feltroman***

The most innovative of the readings of *Byen og verden* that are not rooted in Bakhtin comes from Jan Kjærstad. In his article ‘Menneskets felt. En omvej til Peer Hultberg’s “Byen og verden”’ (1994), the Norwegian author proposes that the novel should be interpreted with one eye on the epic elements of place, the histories that gather at a particular textual or geographical site, and with the other on the types of space produced – or at least represented – by new information technologies: cyberspace, virtual reality, and the hypertextual possibilities emanating from them. His term *feltroman* is inspired by scientific work on electromagnetism and quantum physics. Reality (or indeed a non-linear text) is conceived of as a set of fields, within which the behaviour of particles is characterised by ‘usikkerhed, diskontinuitet og bevægelse i små spring’ and normal expectations of cause and effect are insufficient; later developments also allowed for the possibility that distant parts of the universe

might momentarily affect each other (22). Crucially, Kjærstad insists that '[f]elt har ligeledes med kræfter og bevægelser at gøre, forandring, ikke med en stabil og statisk sandhed, et usynligt facit hvor læseren nærmest bare trækker linierne mellem allerede faste punkter, således at et klart billede træder frem' (22). Furthermore, such a text invites the reader to a greater degree of interaction and imaginative engagement than the average text. Kjærstad goes on to compare the function of the 'hvide mellemrum' (22) of the *feltroman* to that of a metaphor: the deliberate disjunction of unrelated but comparable phenomena, whose inherent tension gives rise to new realisations and knowledge.

Kjærstad's reading is a powerful one, firstly because it seems to suggest that *Byen og verden* is more than a literary experiment, but is among the first blossomings of the textual logic that will supersede the postmodern, just as the information age may be said to herald both the culmination of much of the cultural and industrial logic of postmodernity, and the beginnings of a new episteme. In her epilogue to the revised edition of her classic study *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon muses that electronic technology and globalisation may be the first signs of whatever will come after the postmodern; the 'intertextual, interactive aesthetic suggested by hypertextuality' may be the first stirrings of a new 'Net aesthetic' that re-thinks hierarchy, participation, linearity and the line between the visual and the verbal (Hutcheon 2002: 181). And Jameson thinks that a glimpse of the 'postmodern sublime' can be caught in the 'most energetic' of contemporary novels; fantasies of computer networks disguise a nascent awareness of the behaviour of economic flows in late capitalism (1991: 37-8).

Secondly, Kjærstad's concept of the *feltroman* is a very useful way to think the gaps between and among the texts in *Byen og verden*: the silences between told and untold hi/stories, and the acts of connection and imagination the reader is forced into executing. The metaphor of 'mellemrum' suggests that the gaps are spatial, but actually they are necessarily diachronic as well as synchronic. They encompass missing evidence of causality, that is, the kind of information that would normally be required to make a hi/story 'make sense'. Examples of such missing details might be unknown or indeterminate kinship, agency, motivation, or anteriority. For example, how does Valborg Bæk end up in the same grave as her son (Hultberg 1998: 8)? Who is Aage Briggs' mysterious friend (39)? In this text, chronology, to paraphrase Bhabha, does not return as causality. Instead, the reader builds up networks of information about characters on the basis of fields of associations, contiguities and extrapolations that cut across 'historical' *post hoc propter hoc* interpretations. Here, the role of the doubly-defined postnational model reader is crucial. As in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, the PMR of *Byen og verden* is required to respond to the text both as a 'naïve' reader, whose encyclopedic knowledge of national history contextualises and links the various stories and fills in some of the 'gaps'; but s/he is also expected to play the role of a critical reader, who, like Kjærstad, takes pleasure not just in finding the missing pieces of the puzzle as the texts accumulate, but in the experience of this new 'akkumulationseffekt' (Kjærstad 1994: 24) engendered by the novel's structure, that cuts across expectations of narrative causality and chronology.

#### 4.3. Space as flux: rhetoric and practice in the migrational city

Crucial to *Byen og verden*, though, is the playing out of its hi/stories in a textual space that represents a real world space. The rooting and routing of local identity in local

place is, theorists of the postmodern agree, the other side of the coin from fragmentation and acceleration. How can the *feltroman* be tied to lived space?

‘The metropolis is rendered legible,’ writes Hana Wirth-Nesher (1996: 116), ‘by multiple acts of the imagination’. Revealing the act of ‘reading’ to be both metaphor and practice, Michel de Certeau says of New York:

‘The spectator can read in it a universe that is constantly exploding. In it are inscribed the architectural figures of the *coincidatio oppositorum* formerly drawn in miniatures and mystical textures. On this stage of concrete, steel and glass, cut out between two oceans (the Atlantic and the American) by a frigid body of water, the tallest letters in the world compose a giant rhetoric of excess in both expenditure and production.’ (1999: 127)

De Certeau, then, proposes a *rhetoric of walking* in the city that presupposes a fundamental tension between the reading of the panorama or map of the city, and the practice of living in it. This distinction is illuminated by reading as intertexts *Byen og verden* and its predecessor, the novel *Requiem* (1985) (again, the genre of this work is doubtful). In a sense, this is succumbing to Barthes’ ‘process of filiation’ of author and texts, but, as Wirth-Nesher herself insists, cities are read ‘against’ each other, and come into meaningful being only when read in the light of – ‘against’ – other cities, or against their own past or future (1996: 112). *Requiem* consists of 537 pieces of prose, each a monologue by a different voice, framed by a Prologue and an Epilogue that picture the suffering individuals moving as a crowd, in a rhythmic, hypnotic formulation that is enriched by the novel’s epigram, taken from T.S.Eliot’s *The Wasteland*:

‘Unreal City,  
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.  
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet'  
(Eliot 1999;1922: 25)

'Dagligt kommer de. Kommer de gående. Tavse gennem byen. Gående gennem byen. Tidsløst gående. Livløst gående. Gående.' (Hultberg 1985: 6)

Marianne Ping Huang reads this novel as one immense act of catharsis; the structuring principle is 'purely additive', with a turn to redemption in the Epilogue – 'Livfuldt gående' (611) – which can be accounted for only by a 'crossing of the sphere between private and public [that] takes place within a grand rhythmic movement – in the very soundscape of the novel' (Ping Huang 2001: 174). The dead (livsløse) masses are returned to the land of the living by virtue of their expression of their own individuality (if not subjectivity). Ping Huang quotes Peer Hultberg's comment that *Requiem* should ideally be set within two or three minutes, and her extrapolation on this idea reveals how this novel engages with the dream of simultaneous action by multiple subjects, but in quite a different way from that 'meanwhile' envisaged by Anderson. '[T]he voices are to be beheld', she argues, 'in an extremely shortened perspective, as if we were looking from street level onto the top of a huge tower [...]' In their ideal simultaneity, the voices form a modern mass of the dead, a voice-scape of common sound, a sublime prosodic gesture.' (183). This vertical accumulation leaves little room for the creation of networks, whether textual or social, between the 537 voices; the spatial metaphor suggests simultaneity without community.

While the setting of *Requiem* is almost featureless,<sup>19</sup> in contrast to the textual Viborg of *Byen og verden* with its referent in the extratextual world, the sense of segueing between the cityscape and the humans that live in it is strong in both novels. There is a tension between the formal arrangement of the masses, or the collective, and the action and movement of the individual that spills out of its textual ‘box’, whether these are neatly numbered I-C, or randomly 1-537.

Michel de Certeau offers an elucidation of the crucial difference between these texts, and indeed the nature of this internal tension between their form and content. In an essay now rendered appallingly poignant by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, de Certeau chooses the vantage point of the top floor of the World Trade Center to ponder the role of the city planners and cartographers, whose perspective is made legible only here at the summit. The practitioners of the city are down below, creating an everydayness; the panoramic, planned city, on the other hand, is a simulacrum ‘whose condition of possibility is an *oblivion* and a *misunderstanding* of practices’ (1999: 128, my emphasis). *Requiem* is as much a textual city as *Byen og verden*, for both approach the invisible dimension of the city that consists of movements of all kinds:

‘The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other’ (ibid.)

Of the two novels, however, it is *Byen og verden* that renders legible both the panorama of the town and the red threads running across and between chapters and

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<sup>19</sup> The ‘Indledning’ is punctuated by a random accumulation of features of a dream-like city environment: half-timbered houses, statues, the sound of music

individuals. Rather than a tower, we might think of the voices of *Byen og verden* as caught in the dance of Brownian Motion, the seemingly random and constant movement of particles in a fluid, caused by the bombardment of the molecules of that same fluid.

The city represented in *Byen og verden*, then, is multi-dimensional; it incorporates both a textual mapping of the architectural ‘texturology’ (de Certeau 1999: 127) of Viborg, and the shifting flows of human relations through space and time. In the case of fru forhenværende material- og farvehandelekspedient Holm-Jørgensen, mother of Bjørn, her Sunday walk takes her on a never-varying route through a cityscape which nevertheless varies over the years that she walks it. These two dimensions of her movement are spliced together in the text:

‘turen var altid den samme, op ad Dumpen, ned ad Sct Mathiasgade, forbi Generalkommandoen og Viborghallen og det der i gamle dage var Rundebænken og så gennem Borgvold hvor hun i sit stille sind beklagede at man endnu ikke havde opbygget Salonen efter det tyskerne havde gjort og derefter beklagede at man havde genopbygget Salonen så sent efter det tyskerne gjorde og på en måde og i en stil som tyskerne ville gøre det, men sådan er Viborg jo’ (Hultberg 1998: 261)

De Certeau writes of the Medieval and Renaissance painters who represented the city from a celestial perspective before the advent of high-rise living (127); it may be that texts such as *Byen og verden* now answer an equivalent desire for spatial omniscience in an age when the *physically*-manifested dimensions of urban geography can be captured on film from every conceivable angle, but what de Certeau calls the migrational city – ‘an “anthropological”, poetic and mythic experience of space’ (128) – can at best be represented metaphorically.



#### 4.4. Heterotopology

With its emphasis on the multiplicity of historical times and spaces embedded in places, on the social differentiation of spaces, on movement and flux in spacetimes, and on deviance from social norms, *Byen og verden* represents a universe that cannot be thought in three or four dimensions. It requires a mode of mapping that must incorporate all these dimensions of the cityscape and ethnoscape, and which can encounter and interrogate the spaces and history of the extratextual Viborg. The concept of heterotopia allows us to think outside the bounds of Western spacetime; it is at once more and less than Bakhtin's chronotope, which is a literary tool that links the structure of textual spacetime to cultural convention, and is thus useful in analysing metaphor and genre. The heterotopia is, rather, primarily a tool of socio-cultural (or socio-geographical) analysis, that links the structure of extratextual spacetime to the cultural imaginary, and, by extension, to the products of that culture; though it is not widely employed, some literary and film theorists have found the concept useful in theorising spatial disjunctures (Wark 1993), such as a television news report in which different spacetimes play out in the corner of the screen, which already is a spatio-temporal outlet in one's living room. A heterogeneous space thus opens up to include the viewer or 'reader'. A similar meeting of textual and extratextual spaces is in play when the Viborg of *Byen og verden* is sited in the context of its extratextual referent: Viborg/Denmark/world.

Returning to Viborg Stiftsmuseum, the museum in the prologue to this chapter, we see that it is a heterotopia whose project is the collection of the vestiges of historical time. However, it is their arrangement in space – shelves, cabinets, frames, rooms, levels – that makes the representation of time possible; the spacetime of the local

community and, metonymically, of the nation is also enacted there. This is especially relevant in the context of the late-twentieth century local-global nexus, where a (sense of) place will often necessarily draw on both local and global dimensions of meaning. But the museum also exists as a concrete place in time, entry to which is ostensibly open, but requires adherence to certain rituals which are culturally contingent: silence, reverence, and, not least, knowledge of a cultural context in which the exhibits can ‘make sense’ as exhibits (as opposed to randomly juxtaposed objects) and as *viborgsk* exhibits.

The museum can help us understand the textual spacetime of *Byen og verden*: it can be considered a ‘spatial’ arrangement of texts – somewhere between the format of the empirical work, and the hypothetical space in which the hundred texts interact – as well as a representation, a mimesis of a spacetime that has a referent in the extratextual world. In both ‘worlds’, the individual has a stake in the communal construction of place and sharing of memory that is the basis of the imagined community.

### **Double space: The critique of orthodox time and history**

The spatial structure of *Byen og verden* provides a basis for a critique of orthodox time and history. It will be remembered that in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, the narrator Mads despairs of the gaps between hi/stories, which Kjærstad would call *hvide mellemrum*: ‘historien [...] er et eventyr bygget over nogle spor [...] men de er desværre ikke historien, historien består af forbindelsen imellem dem, og det er den der giver problemer’ (Høeg 1999: 145). While Mads concedes that his attempt to patch together a meaningful narrative of twentieth-century Danish

history is a subjective, partial and unfinished one, the (model) reader is nevertheless guided through the chaos of events and characters by a self-consciously susceptible and sceptical kudos-bearing discourse of historiography and genealogy. In *Byen og verden*, the de-centred or collective narration borrows its kudos, or authority, from popular consent, the system of power upon which social control is based. Even when the possibility of broadly historical knowledge is explicitly challenged, this is expressed as popular wisdom, with a nod to narrative and generic traditions.

‘I og for sig var det ikke fordi det havde været vanskelig at opklare mordet på Palle Hvidt i ordets rent konventionelle betydning, men har man ikke lov til at spørge sig selv om den blotte påvisning af en gerningsmand når alt kommer til alt er identisk med opklaring’ (194)

Again, the critique lies not in explicit commentary but in the *form* of the discourse, the kind of polyphonic dialogue with the ‘public sphere’, and perhaps also with the literary genre of the detective novel. While the power struggles in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* are largely concerned with rival conceptions and functions of time, *Byen og verden* centres on forms of authority which grow and change over time, but – overwhelmingly – find their symbolic and practical expression in space.

Considered from this angle, the challenges levelled at orthodoxies of linear time and history in *Byen og verden* are broadly comparable to those posed in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, but their genesis is different. The critique of the time of modernity is generated by the temporal dislocation experienced by the reader when, as Kjærstad puts it, ‘tiden forlades som rækkefølgens røde tråd’ (1994: 22). Narrative form, in this sense, becomes thematic content, a dynamic suggestive of Anderson’s thesis on the ‘seepage’ of narrative structure into the social construction of reality. Similarly, orthodox emplotment, reliant on a causality predicated on chronology, is

also waylaid. Once again, anthropological observation backs up the theoretical speculations of Benjamin and Foucault as to the contingency of temporal organisation of our experience and memory. Kirsten Hastrup has pointed out that this ontological practice is not necessarily universal:

‘In Western thinking about history, the context has been established as one of chronology. Events have been causally connected in time rather than space. The latter would link particular events to culture and cosmology [...] [C]ausal connections are established from events to antecedent phenomena - whence “temporal causation”. The result is that antecedents in general have been treated as causes, opening the way for a process of infinite regress through chronological time. This process has, however, been punctuated, and the relevant antecedent has been selected [...] For all the shared human experience of time, the potential ways of registering it are culture-specific’ (1992b: 104)

Accordingly, it is possible to conceive of a society whose interpretation of historical causality privileges spatial rather than temporal relations. Hastrup’s anthropological study of pre-modern Iceland reveals a collective imagining of an Icelandic *Uchronia*, ‘a separate history, a history, so to speak, out of time’ (113), co-existing with contemporary experience of socio-economic developments which did not register, for the mass of Icelanders, as ‘events’; the concept of the linear progression of history was resisted for as long as modernity was resisted in Iceland.

Hastrup’s object of study is the process by which events are registered. This, she argues, is a way to conceive of or trace the creation of history on the synchronic dimension:

‘Event-richness is a feature of space, and it is identified in the synchronic dimension. In the diachronic dimension, relative event-richness is transformed into relative historical density [...] For events to be memorized and to become part of ‘history’ they must have been experienced as culturally significant. This apparently self-evident point covers a fundamental truth: the structuring of history and the selective

memory are not solely imposed retrospectively. Contemporary event registration always serves as the baseline for the trace of experience left in history' (117)

These observations can help to explain the process by which the reader of *Byen og verden* manages to make connections between texts and to activate the 'field' of hi/stories constituted by the texts that make up the novel. Thus, in *Byen og verden*, the PMR is implicated in the performative role (in Bhabha's sense) of the national subject – imagining a community into existence from the 'scraps, patches and rags' of everyday life; in a sense, reading between the lines. The pedagogical dimension of the national narrative, meanwhile, seems to be lifted out of the 'national' (Danish) dimension of the spacetime of *Byen og verden*, and re-negotiated as a 'viborgsk' orthodoxy concomitant with the Danish doxa: 'udansk' is often conflated with 'uviborgsk'. While Middleton & Woods, in *Literatures of Memory* (2000) are not concerned specifically with the national imagination, their work speaks to the imagining of social communities through the practice of reading:

'Reading itself is a practice of memory, because texts are forms of prosthetic social memory by which readers increase and correct their own limited cognitive strengths and participate in a public memorial space.'  
(2000: 5)

The memorial space is not only textual, but also social; implicated in it are not only the spaces between hi/stories but also the spaces between members of the imagined community, the physically-, socially- and historically-imbued spaces which, in the end, are the fundamental basis of that community. Put differently, the dynamic of the individual texts of *Byen og verden* does not rest so much on the 'double time' of the nation, but on a 'double space': a centrifugal movement out into the world, out into

hi/stories, and away from the textual centre, and a simultaneous centripetal movement towards judgement and interpretation back in Viborg.

## Chapter 4

### Remembering Today

#### Vibeke Grønfeldt: *I dag*, 1998

‘Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the “time of the now” which is shot through with chips of Messianic time.’ (Benjamin 1999: 255)

Thought, movement, the pauses in between [...]

The swollen river lips the bank  
the branches bead, and something stops:

It comes clear: time doesn’t flow, it drips  
and here’s eternities between the drops.

from Andrew Greig: ‘After the Flood’ (*Into You*, 2001)

#### 1. *Stille eksistenser?* Situating the national margins in space and time

While *Byen og verden*, with its juxtapositions of eras, lives and spaces, constitutes a textual network where stories complete and contradict each other, the third novel in this study, Vibeke Grønfeldt’s *I dag* (1998), returns to the chronology of clocks as a guiding light – but not to the ‘continuum of history’ (Benjamin 1999: 253). If *Byen og verden* attempts to build bridges over the ‘hvide mellemrum’ (Kjærstad) of the lives of other people, *I dag* encapsulates its stories like the beads of time dripping from Greig’s branch. Mixing metaphors, we might also say that *I dag* presents us with biopsies of moments: each chapter is situated on a given calendar date between 1952 and 1996, and most (but not all) of the chapters also include a present-tense account of a point in time on that day. The stories all seem to take place in the same landscape, a nameless, rural, Danish location.

### 1.1. Benjamin and the historical constellation

In the passage above, Benjamin contrasts the historian who tells ‘the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary’ to the one who ‘grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one’. But the former image undermines itself in its reduction of the recitation of the rosary to a ‘sequence’; the rosary is cyclical and cumulative, its iterations formalised by a set of mysteries that thematise each circuit of the string, and the beads are themselves tallied in decades, an arrangement that speaks to the iconicity of decades in *I dag*. From this point of view, the rosary actually becomes a useful metaphor for Bhabha’s ‘double-and-split’ time of the narration of the nation, between the ‘continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical’ and ‘the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative’ (Bhabha 1994: 146).

Nevertheless, Benjamin’s second image, that of the present *in constellation with an* earlier era, is a poignant one. It seems to grow out of Benjamin’s concern to relativise modern historicism’s fixation with the idea of progress through ‘homogeneous, empty time’ (Benjamin 1999: 252). The choice of which events (beads on a string) to identify as causes and effects, Benjamin recognises, is contingent on contemporary desires and fears: moments only become historical posthumously (255). And elsewhere: ‘[f]or every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably’ (247). Thus, a representation – a *forestilling* – of a past era will tend to form a constellation with the socio-cultural norms and historiographical conventions of the time of its production. This does not necessarily contradict Hastrup’s observation (1992b:117) that event richness is also determined by event registration in the present, for contemporary accounts of an event



will filter through to future representations of it. The idea that moments only become historical posthumously – reiterated in various ways by Foucault, White, and so on (see chapter 1) – is also echoed in the epigram to chapter 2, on *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*: ‘[a] chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history’ (246). A recognition of the inadequacy and contingency of the historian’s grasp of events has obtained since the birth of the discipline; but Benjamin’s observations have probably engendered a more chronic loss of faith in the possibility of attaining perfect, objective knowledge: only in the fullness of time, he thinks, will the past, in all its detailed complexity, be revealed; until Judgement Day, the historian, in all his human narrowness of vision, must select and interpret.

## **1.2. Chronology as pathology**

As we saw in chapter 2, however, a mock-naïve refusal to distinguish between major and minor events in any given stretch of time can be a textual, or even political, strategy. In the case of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, the narrator’s ambition to make his account of events in all their astonishing prodigiousness ‘udtømmende og enkelt’ (Høeg 1999: 7) results in a text whose event-richness subverts the ‘længslen efter orden’ inherent in both hi/story-writing and in the organisation of the Welfare State. *I dag*, in contrast, is both event-poor and organised within an arcane system of dates that has driven critics to almost cabbalistic interpretations of the ordering principles of the novel’s structure. The following account, from the magazine StandART, can serve as a summary of the formal

characteristics of *I dag*, but it also illustrates the general fascination of reviewers with the curious temporal precision of the stories:

‘De 30 billeder er – på fire nær – opdelt i to, én med en datooverskrift, fortalt i datid, og én med en angivelse af tidspunktet på dagen, fortalt i nutid. Vi starter den 4. juli 1952 klokken seks, og i dette og de følgende 10 billeder er klokken hel, og alle årstider repræsenteret. Herefter – fra 1972 og frem til 1988 – følger 12 afsnit, hvor klokken er halv, og som alle udspiller sig om vinteren. Herefter – fra 1989 og frem – følger de sidste syv afsnit, der alle foregår om sommeren, og hvoraf det sidste som nævnt præsenterer fortælleren.<sup>20</sup> I disse billeder er klokken fem minutter over hel.’ (Falkesgaard 1996: 1)

This reviewer also goes on to comment that the individual episodes are arranged with shorter intervening periods, as the century progresses. On one level, then, *I dag* presents a time-line which is straight and regulated, calibrated to Western clock and calendar time. One might call this classic realist time, in that it corresponds to the kind of time which Anderson attributes to the nineteenth-century realist novel; the kind of time which, it will be remembered, creates a sense of ‘meanwhile’ for national subjects, in which ‘simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked [...] by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar’ (Anderson 1991: 24). The postnational model reader imagines a community whose history corresponds chronologically to that of his or her own, thanks to the selection of points in time described in the novel. The sure and certain knowledge of ‘steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity’ (26) by a multitude of individuals moving along the same time-line that Anderson sees as essential to national imagining is here reinforced by the grafting of identifiable points in time in the ‘real’ world to their equivalents in the textual world. This feature of *I dag* is not shared by *Byen og verden*, with its vague

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<sup>20</sup> The question as to whether the ‘narrator’ appears in the final episode is moot, and will be taken up again below.

system of dating and fluid temporalities, or by *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, with its mischievous, magical realist temporal tricks; although all three novels allude to verifiable, pedagogically-mediated historical events that match up with the PMR's real-world knowledge, only *I dag* displays such loyalty to realist clock and calendar time. It seems reasonable to infer that the illusion of simultaneity of PMR and characters in homogeneous, empty time is thereby fostered. But one passage in the novel hints at the pathology of such adherence to counting and regularity. Christian has some form of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, one of the symptoms of which is that he counts days and hours, and creates other series of numbers such as the number of different plant species in a square metre, the number of each size of pebble on the seashore, and so on:

‘Han må undersøge og tælle op for at få fat i verden. [...] Der er gået endnu fire minutter af den fjortende november 1972, som er kortere end den trettende, som er kortere end den tolvte. Men dog længere end den femtende.’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 115)

For Christian, marking the calendar and counting units of time has to do with the security of numbers, not with the imagining of community and simultaneity.

The interesting conclusion to Falkesgaard's review is that the three major sections of the novel identified by the patterns of distribution of clock-times correspond to three watersheds in the relationship between Denmark and the EC/EU, and thus between the individual and Capital: Adenauer's appearance in 1952, the Danish referendum on Common Market membership in 1972, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, when ‘kapitalismen dermed blev udbredt som den eneste mulige produktionsmåde i Byen og Verden’ (ibid.; the reviewer has already drawn comparisons with the Hultberg novel alluded to here). Indeed, various critics have read Grønfeldt's oeuvre as an

ongoing critique of the changes in Danish society and demography stemming from an upsurge in ‘materialistic’ values (in the socio-cultural, rather than ontological, sense of the word) and socio-economic rationalisation (van der Liet 1999b, Hjort-Vetlesen 1999, Frandsen 2000). While one might argue that Falkesgaard’s reading is unhelpfully paranoid – and polemical – in its implicit attribution of an anti-EU ‘message’ in the novel, it does raise interesting questions about the iconic power of historical dates, or rather strings of dates, that Bryld and Warring identify as ‘knuder på et tov’ with a binding effect in a nationalist historical narrative (1998: 14). Here, Falkesgaard is reading his own national-historical string into the structure of a novel which, as van der Liet (1999b) points out, is only implicitly Danish, and therefore universally allegorical. Also of relevance is Falkesgaard’s interpretation of the fall of the Berlin Wall as signifying the ultimate victory of capitalism, where Fukuyama (1992) would say liberalism. For, crucially, *I dag* deals not only with iconic dates, but with iconic events of global significance. These events are mediated in this text through the mass media; early on, through the radio, and later, television. The advent of the town’s first television, in 1957 (Grønfeldt 1998: 29), is preceded by the epigrammatic ‘[t]iden forandrede uden hjælp alting for alle’ (29). The role of the media in ‘event registration’ will be considered in more depth below; for the moment, suffice to note that the time of *I dag* is incorporated into the forward march of world history. National and international ‘facts’ of history filter into the fiction through the ether, or through the mailbox, as it were.

### **1.3. A double world: margins, modernity, media**

For even the beleaguered Danish country bumpkin has access to the media of supermodernity, as Torben Madsen pointed out as early as 1991:

‘In Denmark it is possible for people to be isolated from the rest of society economically, while remaining in the midst of the common media flow, with all the knowledge they could want about world politics, big city life, cultural trends, and fashion phenomena. Grønfeldt’s novels take place in this double world.’ (Madsen 1991)

### 1.3.1. Time embedded in landscape

This is a more than usually nuanced interpretation of the tension between urban centre and rural periphery, between innocent past and decadent present, that most criticism finds in Grønfeldt’s novels. The biographical tone of *Danske digtere i det tyvende århundrede*, for example, is coloured with an occasional tinge of quasi-romantic determinism:

‘Grønfeldt beskriver ofte, hvordan opbruddet fra et livsmønster kan påføre individer eller befolkningsgrupper omkostninger af sociale og psykologiske art. Det landbo- og håndværker-samfund med sine *lokalt bundne livsformer*, som hun selv har erfaret i sin opvækst, spiller en stor rolle i hendes prosa. Ikke som kulturhistoriske beskrivelser, og slet ikke som argumenter, men som en stille, underliggende erfaring, tone, sansning og menneskeforståelse, der kritisk rejses mod de moderne former.’ (Frandsen 2000: 214, my emphasis)

Although, as Frandsen calculates, the author’s native Samsø must be the geographical centre of Denmark (213), the classification of Grønfeldt’s novels, as a matter of orthodoxy, as writing-from-the-margins tends to conflate geographical marginality with historical marginality. In other words, the rural setting of *I dag*, with its ‘lokalt bundne livsformer’, is not only outside but anterior to ‘de moderne former’. The countryside is read as a place of innocence whose long, slow Fall into the knowledge of the Modern is an allegory for that of national society as a whole. This is not to deny that the socio-economic changes experienced by residents of the Danish countryside since the 1950s constitute an important theme in Grønfeldt’s oeuvre; rather, it is

symptomatic of the conflation of certain parts of the national landscape with certain times of national history, which has obtained ever since (and probably before) Hans Christian Andersen in the wake of Walter Scott's enormous popularity in Denmark, fell in love with the gypsies of Jutland and proclaimed the province 'our very own Scotland' (Scavenius 1994: 174-85). This imagined landscape is as contingent, constructed, and, ultimately, as colonial as any other; its iconic features are tropes of political, cultural, linguistic and territorial discourses. As we know, the topography of the national landscape must be considered a palimpsest, a doubly- (or multiply-) layered construction, existing in text as well as in soil and rock. Moreover, a *national* topography must be a *historical* one – it must include the temporal dimension of landscape. Thus the 'real' and the 'textual' landscapes are also collective – and individual – memoryscapes. The nation is imagined synchronically as well as diachronically; the peripheral limits and borderlands are important for the former dynamic, and the nation's mythic origins and destiny are important for the latter, though the two can hardly be separated.

The 'recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity' (Bhabha 1994: 143) weaves its way through time, place and text in the national imagination. Part of the imagined landscape is its temporality, the type of time assumed to be embedded in it. This may be geological, 'deep' time, connecting the people to the ancient rocks of the landscape, as in this meditation by the climber G.F.Dutton on how human, botanical and geological chronologies merge in the Scottish mountains:

'[y]ou climb through "Deep Time" - beside you, last week's seedling roots itself into strata weathered before life began [...] and often only the brute compulsion of your lower centres hauls you back from the junkie delight of dissolving into the O-so-caressing Infinite' (Dutton 2001:157).

Or the embedded time may be attributed to the imagination of the people who live in the landscape. The sociologist Maurice Halbwachs observes that (European) ‘peasants’, being rooted in the soil which is their livelihood and their home, find community in the rotation of the seasons and the repetition of traditions:

‘When different families living on neighbouring fields make use of a good day to sow or harvest, when they consult the sky to determine whether a dry spell will continue or whether hail will destroy tender buds, a communal life awakens among them, and similar preoccupations pertain to both families. peasant thought and memory comes into play among them.’ (Halbwachs 1992: 67)

### **1.3.2. Myths, metaphor and memoryscape: Bhabha’s national double-time**

Bhabha describes the dynamic and multidimensional process of mapping – and delimiting – the nation in time and space thus:

‘the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its irredeemably plural modern space, bounded by different, even hostile nations, into a signifying space that is archaic and mythical, paradoxically representing the nation's modern territoriality [...] the difference of space returns as the Sameness of time, turning Territory into Tradition, turning the People into One’ (1994: 149)

But, to extend Bhabha’s reasoning, if the signifying space of the modern nation displaces its ‘irredeemably plural’ nature, so too does the ‘Sameness of time’ hide behind a split (or double) mythical national time, for if the local landscape, with its romantic temporality of the seasons, is ‘archaic and mythical’, it is both archetypal and atavistic in relation to the modern nation. The marginal places that lie ‘out of history’ (Craig 1996) are both central to the national narrative and displaced as its

other. Indeed, Bhabha echoes Craig's formulation further on in *DissemiNation*: 'I have suggested that the atavistic national past and its language of archaic national belonging marginalize the present of the "modernity" of the national culture, rather like suggesting that history happens "outside" the centre and core.' (1994: 167)

In this respect, when Bhabha critiques Bakhtin's response to Goethe's 'vision of emergence' of the Italian nation in his description of the microscopic events of everyday life, where '[n]ational time becomes concrete and visible in the chronotype of the local, particular, graphic, from beginning to end' (Bhabha 1994: 143), he is trying to explain the slipperiness – and the seductiveness – of a so-called representative national space-time rooted in the local. If a visualised national landscape is a metaphorical 'inscape' of national identity and its history 'from beginning to end' (143), argues Bhabha, this is only a vain attempt to surmount the time of repetition suggested by the recurring nature of the national 'present'. Again, there is a split between 'the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative' (145). What is at stake in *I dag* is a pedagogical (literary) conflation of the homogeneous originary nation with an unexpected grouping of 'people of the pagus', that is, rural Denmark.

### **1.3.3. Resisting the linear/cyclical distinction**

In the case of *I dag*, the interaction of these two temporalities is caught up in the text's distinctive structure. A romantic reading of national time would pit the cycle of the hours, days and seasons, rooted in the landscape, against the thrusting progressive time of modernity, just as Frandsen's commentary, above, pits the local against the modern. In fact, marxian sociology would insist, the life histories of individuals living



on the margins of society (we might say: ‘jarring witnesses’) corroborate this conflict. Paul Connerton observes that ‘when oral historians listen carefully to what their informants have to say they discover a perception of time that is not linear but cyclical’, appealing to a hierarchy of cycles moving through days, weeks, months, seasons, years and generations (Connerton 1989: 20). It is important to establish that these conflicting – or perhaps complementary – temporalities are *not* directly analogous to Bhabha’s double-time, which rests on the split between a nationalist pedagogy, which finds its authority in the historical past, and the performative iteration of national life in the present (145). It is too simple to interpret the haunting presence of ‘rural’, cyclical time as a strategy of resistance or a performance of alterity in defiance of the time of modernity. Rather, the contestation of ‘local’ and ‘modern’ national identities – a work-in-progress which Bhabha describes as ‘sliding ambivalently from one enunciatory position to the other’ (147) – reveals a liminality within the nation: the rural. Those who are closest to the national landscape return as the Other within. Writing the margins of modernity entails an opening up to ‘the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference’ (148) both within the world of the text and in the national culture in which it is received and consumed.

#### 1.4. **The time of *I dag***

In *I dag*, a distinction between local cyclical time and modern progressive time cannot be maintained. The telescopic focusing on – and opening out into – identified days and moments answers the craving, identified by Bakhtin, for a representation of the local, in a defined place and fragment of time. However, like Mads’ fractal *øjeblikke* in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, which encapsulate ‘et koncentrat af et helt

århundrede' (Høeg 1999: 8), the temporal fragments related in *I dag* cannot unproblematically be reduced to instances of chronotopic intersections of narrative space and time, in which time 'thickens, takes on flesh' and space becomes 'charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history' (Bakhtin 1981: 84), situating the 'vision of emergence' in a wider narrative flow. While Bakhtin is aware of the limitations of what he calls the 'viscous and sticky time' of the chronotope of the provincial town, a cyclical chronotope which, he says, is only of use when interwoven with linear sequences (Bakhtin 1981: 247-8), it is unsatisfying simply to characterise the time of *I dag*'s episodes as 'cyclical' (of clock time and season), standing in contrast with the grander, more linear narrative of history implied by the progression of dates. For one thing, the 'movement of plot' in this novel is subsumed into the movement up (or down) historical time *per se*; the causal emplotment that drives the narrative of the realist novel and of national history is largely absent here. Not even the retrospective establishing of cause and effect that is evident across and between the individual texts in *Byen og verden* is in play in *I dag*. Characters act, but the connections between their acts are lost in the 'eternities between the drops' that we are not witness to. An appropriate analogy can perhaps be found in Anderson's comments on the role of the daily newspaper in the national imagination, where the seemingly arbitrary inclusion of far-flung events can only be accounted for by 'calendrical coincidence': the date on the mast-head, which reassures us that the rest of the world 'ambles sturdily along' through the same accumulative space-time (1991: 33). 'Reading a newspaper,' muses Anderson in a footnote to this comment, 'is like reading a novel whose author has abandoned any thought of a coherent plot.'

This kind of newspaper temporality is already established in the first episode of *I dag*, when, under the rubric of ‘Klokken seks’, within the framework of ‘Den 4. juli 1952’, Alma Kvist switches off the radio:

‘Hun trykker på kontakten uden at have hørt et ord om Konrad Adenauer, Grauballe-manden eller de tordenbyger, som nærmer sig bakkerne vest for byen, hvor ungkreaturene græsser.’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 8)

Thus Alma’s movement from washing up to making her husband’s packed lunch is set in a relationship of simultaneity with developments in international politics (Adenauer), the discovery of ‘Danish’ ancestry in the landscape (Grauballe-manden), and the imminent future of the weather forecast, as well as the movement of the young cattle on the land. The moment thus opens out into global space and downwards into national memoryscape, as well as into local place. Though not every episode in *I dag* opens out to the events of the wider world in this way, each is a capsule of time (an extended moment), inside a bigger capsule (a day), isolated in the stream of time suggested by the adherence to chronological realism. While the fetishising of exact clock-time implicates, certainly, an iterative movement of the everyday, it also *extracts* the described moments from that same cycle; in effect, it breaks the continuity, the very essence, of the cycle. In so doing, it re-establishes the sense of simultaneity across time essential for Anderson’s model of national imagining, but inimical to Bakhtin’s insistence on the charging of a given space with the flow of national time. Put differently, the specificity of six o’clock on July 4 1952 (Adenauer, Grauballe-manden, her sister-in-law’s impending death) undermines the quasi-mythical, originary authority that the chronotopic intersection of (Danish) time and space at six o’clock might claim for itself (Alma’s kitchen routine, the continued grazing of the cattle, the Six O’Clock News itself). The episode at six o’clock in the

countryside is more metonym than metaphor for national life. Rural Denmark, then, cannot be reduced to the nation's ur-landscape, the Valley-Where-Time-Has-Stopped; it is one chiasmatic site of Bhabha's double-time of the nation, and of its double space (see chapter 3).

### 1.5. Retrospective interjections

The chiasma of temporalities becomes more perplexed, however, when the next line of the passage quoted above is brought into the equation:

*'...hvor ungreaturene græsser. Hvor rigmandhusene og de låste låger siden breder sig, skyder op overalt.'* (ibid.)

The interjection in italics in this passage is the first appearance of a recurring voice in the novel that is privy to historical developments posterior to the point-in-time indicated by the episode's heading. It is a textual anomaly, whose distancing force is succinctly described by Frandsen: '[i] hver af episoderne lader Grønfeldt tiden springe et enkelt sted eller to' (2000:219). Throughout the present discussion, this 'voice', which, I will claim, is not reducible to an identifiable narrator, will be referred to as a Retrospective Interjection (RI). The voice usually gives information pertaining to the fates of peripheral characters or the development of tracts of land, as in this case, or makes opinionated comments on cultural issues. The function of these RI will be expanded on as this discussion progresses; for the moment, the effect of temporal disjunction it creates is of most interest, for it both (a) intensifies the projection of a linear chronology that continues on to the present day (possibly beyond the temporal horizon of the novel), and (b) undermines the security of newspaper-style chronological realism by penetrating the narrative with shards of

another temporality beyond (not necessarily after, but certainly beyond) the immediate spacetime of the text.

Thus the isolated, temporal biopsies that form the series of episodes constituting *I dag* come closer than the other two novels we have considered to expressing the strange ‘double-time’ of Bhabha’s nation-people; the co-mingling of pedagogical, accumulative history with the disjointed, fragmentedly-experienced everyday. And if Bhabha goes on (158-9) to deconstruct Anderson’s insistence on the importance for nationness of a sense of simultaneity along homogeneous, empty time, imbuing the restrictively homogeneous synchrony of the ‘meanwhile’ with the performative hetero-temporality of Anderson’s own, later, turn to the sense of ‘unisonance’ in language that ‘looms up imperceptibly out of a horizonless past’ (Anderson 1991: 144), we see that *I dag* can also encompass this doubling of the communal imagination.

## **2. History and memory**

*I dag* can do so because of its concern with memory and forgetting, performative processes which, Bhabha tells us, have to do with the will to nationhood.

### **2.1. Remembering to forget**

Ernest Renan’s essay *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?* (1990;1882), treated at some length by Bhabha (1994; 159-161), is given more consideration in Anderson’s revised edition (1991) of *Imagined Communities* than it is in the earlier edition of 1983 (Bhabha’s essay, originally published in 1990, naturally refers to the 1983 edition). At issue here is a curious grammatical twist used in the original French:

‘Or, l’essence d’une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun et aussi que tous aient oublié bien de choses... Tout citoyen français doit avoir oublié la Saint-Barthélemy...’ (cited in Anderson 1991: 199)

[‘Yet, the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common and also that they all have forgotten many things... Every French citizen ought to have forgotten the (pogrom of) Saint Barthélemy...’] (my translation)

As Anderson (1991: 200) and Bhabha (1994:160) point out, the fact that the historical events cited by Renan here are recognisable to his French audience clashes with the French syntax that assumes the (known) historical events ought already to have been forgotten, subsumed in national pedagogy as formative, fratricidal wars. Both also insist on the ambivalence of forgetting, which, in this context, is at once an obligation, an act sponsored by the will to nationhood, and an involuntary act of the fallible human mind. And yet both challenge only obliquely the problematic collapsing of individual acts of remembrance and forgetting into a collective memory or forgetting. Anderson is unequivocal: ‘[a]s with modern persons, so it is with nations. Awareness of being embedded in secular, serial time, with all its implications of continuity, yet of “forgetting” the experience of this continuity [...] engenders the need for a narrative of “identity”’ (1991: 205). Even Bhabha’s co-opting of the obligation to forget into his schema of the double time of pedagogy and performance does not quite manage to strip the act of forgetting of its communal metaphoricity:

‘To be obliged to forget – in the construction of the national present – is not a question of historical memory; it is the construction of a discourse on society that *performs* the problem of totalizing the people and unifying the national will. That strange time – forgetting to remember – is a place of “partial identification” inscribed in the daily plebiscite which represents the performative discourse of the people.’ (Bhabha 1994: 160-1, emphasis in original)

The explosion of interdisciplinary interest in the concept of memory in the humanities and social sciences in the last decade is only now raising the hackles of some theorists, who question whether the gains in understanding of cultural history – *what* people remember – have eclipsed inconsistencies and incompatibilities in methodology – *how* individuals and collectives remember (Kansteiner 2002: 180). In particular, the terminology of psychoanalysis has tended to be applied metaphorically in collective memory studies as well as more properly in research into individual remembrance. Whether the emphasis is on the homogeneity of a national group - Renan's attribution of a 'national will' to a people – or on its heterogeneity and complex temporality – Bhabha's ambivalent slippage between remembering and forgetting as part of the 'performative discourse of the people' – the temptation to conceive of the 'people' as being in possession of some communal faculty of thought seems to prevail. After all, the very notion of a nation depends on the dictum 'out of many, one'.

## **2.2. Collective memory**

Another reason for this methodological weakness is the influence of one of the founding fathers of the study of social memory, Maurice Halbwachs, whose death in Buchenwald precluded the development of his later work towards a more satisfying distinction between, as Connerton puts it, social memory proper and simple 'facts of communication between individuals' (Connerton 1989: 38). Nevertheless, Halbwachs' insistence on the conceptual irrelevance of individual memory (except for dreams), that is, outwith a social network of mutually reinforcing remembrance, located in a particular material space, has been extremely influential for the 'memory

wave' in the humanities. Halbwachs sums up his hypothesis in the Preface to his *On Collective Memory* thus:

‘It is in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection.’ (Halbwachs 1992: 38)

While Halbwachs does not treat national remembering specifically, concentrating on familial, religious and class-based social memory, the applicability of this rather loose framework to our conceptualising of the imagining of national history should be obvious: individual memories of ‘national’ events take on meaning when discussed, compared, and modulated by those of other individuals, in the context of prevailing social *mores*, and in various media (or mnemotechnics – see below), including the printed word. The relationship between individual and collective memory – social memory – is crucial to the present study. Moreover, the ethical import of Halbwachs’ project – he was concerned to de-stabilise the Christian myth-history of Jerusalem – speaks to the search for a de-centred plurality of voices in text so beloved of Bakhtin and Bhabha. In Richard Sennett’s words, Halbwachs is a liberal *par excellence*: only ‘the restlessness of memory’ can foster a social structure where memories are exchanged and modulated across cultural difference, destabilising narrative re-construction (Sennett 1998: 19-20).

While Anderson’s and Bhabha’s appeal to Renan’s dictum on forgetting is illuminating insofar as it reveals the ambivalence of knowledge that underlies the national subject – the constructedness of the nation is known and yet not known – it also, unhelpfully, conflates two types of ‘memory’: those constructed and disseminated *post hoc* by schoolbooks and governments, and those based in personal



experience. The latter comes to stand as metaphor for the former. This is not to say, of course, that personal memories will not intersect and overlap with mediated representations of collectively ‘remembered’ events; on the intersection between the two, Kansteiner notes: ‘[collective memory] is a collective phenomenon but it only manifests itself in the actions and statements of individuals [...] It is as much a result of conscious manipulation as unconscious absorption and it is always mediated.’ (2002: 180) Thus Halbwachs’ notion of individual memories as dream-like fragments, ‘a pile of rough-hewn materials with superimposed parts heaped one upon the other’ (Halbwachs 1992: 42), until set in the context of a social framework, becomes more nuanced. Once mediated through social dialogue, continues Halbwachs, the network of remembrance resembles ‘the walls of an edifice maintained by a whole armature, supported and reinforced by neighbouring edifices. The dream is based only on itself, whereas our recollections depend on those of all our fellows, and on the great frameworks of the memory of society.’ (ibid.) While this image emphasises the mutually reinforcing work of individual memories at the expense of a sense of fluidity of exchange, it nevertheless effectively expresses the hierarchical, or, perhaps better, concentric (as in *Byen og verden*) interrelationship between individual and collectivities. We are back to Bhabha’s shifting symbiosis of performative and pedagogical versions of the national historical narrative.

### **2.3. The historical academy and the ‘memory wave’**

Another danger in the turn to memory is the flippant collapsing of ‘memory’ into ‘history’, rather than a fruitful blurring of boundaries. As we have seen, the testimonies of ‘jarring witnesses’ to history play with established limits of historical proof and objectivity, blend fact and fiction, and destabilise any immanent historical

truth; in narratives with a postnational, posthistorical, sensibility, such strategies can have an impact only because they stand in contrast to Historical tradition. Just as Bhabha's performative iteration of national identities could have no meaning without a pedagogy to kick against, so too does 'the memory wave' draw on its alterity to History for its *raison d'être*. However, as Dominick LaCapra cogently argues in his seminal work *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (1998), the 'enemy brothers' (17) of the tendency, on the one hand, vehemently to oppose history to memory, and, on the other, the tendency to conflate the two, are equally obstructive. In the first case, History isolates itself in its ivory tower, denying the enrichment memory could bring to more academic sources, argues LaCapra, in a formulation which begins to bring us close to the destabilising functions of memory for a pedagogical narrative:

'[e]ven in its falsifications, repressions, displacements, and denials, memory may nonetheless be informative – not in terms of an accurate empirical representation of its object but in terms of that object's often anxiety-ridden reception and assimilation by both participants in events and those born later.' (19)

Paying attention to which remembrances seem to be 'anxiety-ridden' can ensure the relevance of history as a discipline to the concerns of a society. The duty of history, on the other hand, is to 'test' memory for qualities which may go beyond empirical accuracy but still be 'significant', and to contextualise it economically and demographically (20). Connerton, too, sees the interrogation of social memory as an imperative for historians (Connerton 1989: 13). Kansteiner states categorically: 'Collective memory is not history, though it is sometimes made from similar material' (2002: 180). Therefore, both historiography (as a discipline) and social memory (as a practice, which may also be an object of study) are potentially and mutually implicated in the ongoing negotiation of centred and de-centred national narratives.

Indeed, from contemporary Denmark, we know that historians are more likely than lay-people to be alive to the constructedness and contingency of orthodox national narratives.

The idea that ‘anxiety-ridden’ remembrances are likely to correspond most closely to the needs of society is supported by Claus Bryld, whose general pessimism at the ‘mytisk prægede budskaber’ served up as standard popular historical fare on Danish television is countered by his observation that the ‘konsensusramme’ which dictates programming is, occasionally, upset by the outbreak of lengthy and heated debates on the shape of history, which are interesting, he says, because they ‘røber noget om både konsensus’ens indhold og dens grænser’ (Bryld 2001: 162). While novels do not share the visual immediacy or extensive audience of television, we can postulate that they nevertheless have the potential to spark off similarly cathartic debates about the historical circumstances they describe, thus contributing to the on-going negotiation of consensus on the historical parameters of the national community.

What we are about here, however, is the writing of the space-time of the nation; we are not concerned so much with *how* (physiologically or psychologically) Danes remember individually and collectively as how their remembrances and forgettings are represented and mediated in fiction, and how these textual processes and strategies might ‘seep’ into reality, that is, into thought and action. The importance of memory and forgetting as an individual and collective act, and the tension between these, become central to the following discussion of *I dag*’s writing of its local and national communities.

### 3. *I dag*: the time of remembering

Returning to Benjamin, and staying with the questions thrown up by the compelling formal structure of *I dag*, the figure of the constellation can help us move beyond a straightforward listing of the episodic beads on a chronological string this novel contains. If we go back to the review of *I dag* cited earlier, we see that Falkesgaard's account of the novel's patterns poses niggling questions that undermine the chronological realist effect. Why should the tense shift from past to present as the narrative homes in on a moment of a given day? Why should the individual texts be grouped into mysterious patterns, by season and minute? And why the lacunæ, which Falkesgaard skims over with a quick 'på fire nær', in four of the texts which do not consist of the standard twin sections of 'date' and 'time'? Without engaging in speculation as to the numerological significance of these temporal and seasonal patterns in the extant text, I want to suggest that the background noise of regular, easily identifiable patternings has the effect of throwing deviations into sharp relief. It is the impact of the deviations, or textual lacunæ, that acts to intensify the functioning of the text in the creation of a national spacetime. Most crucially, the RIs from an unidentified narrator, as suggested above, serve to destabilise the accumulative temporality of linear history established by the novel's structure.

#### 3.1. Verner

The final episode of *I dag* is narrated in the first person, unlike all the others, which are narrated in the third person. This has led reviewers (e.g. Falkesgaard 1998, van der Liet 1999b), to declare, *post hoc propter hoc*, that Verner, the narrator of this particular text, is also the controlling subject who interjects opinions and posterior happenings into the temporal biopsies. Since much of the rest of the text is also told in

free indirect discourse, this is a plausible hypothesis; that is, that Verner, thanks to his job in the community's *plejehjem*, is able to collect and re-tell the remembered events and experiences mumbled by the sleeping or senile pensioners. It is nevertheless a problematic assumption, because Verner knows too much: he must be an omniscient narrator who can identify exact points in time, fill in the patchy vagaries of other people's recollected experience and provide relevant 'gossip'. Of course, it is the questions thrown up by Verner's apparent appearance as the 'key' to the puzzle of the structure of *I dag* that, ultimately, make the novel more than a pastoral, historical meditation.

Firstly, it is stating the obvious to write that in telling, Verner (Vibeke) is still told; s/he is both narrator and narrated. My formulation here deliberately echoes the passage from Lyotard quoted by Bhabha in 'DissemiNation' (1994: 150) to illustrate how the ethnographic act – the telling of one's own community – depends on a splitting of the ethnographer's self; s/he must abandon the self in order to grasp a culture, but retain enough subjectivity to explain it. This, as Høeg's Smilla tells us, is an impossible, slippery task:

'Der er én måde at forstå en anden kultur på. At *leve* den. At flytte ind i den, at bede om at blive tålt som gæst, at lære sig sproget. På et eller andet tidspunkt kommer så måske forståelsen. Den vil da altid blive ordløs. Det øjeblik man begriber det fremmede, mister man trangen til at forklare det. At forklare et fænomen er at fjerne sig fra det.' (Høeg 1992: 184, emphasis in original)

Verner, then, becomes an ideal ethnographer, not because he is an outsider, but because he is an insider who has chosen to stand a little outside society. This is a theme he pontificates on at some length:

‘Jeg har valgt og delt tingene op. Herunder mig selv. [...] Med dele mener jeg krop og sjæl, bevidsthed og lyster, hænder og hoved, fællesskab og privatliv. Og på grund af opdelningen har jeg ikke andel i de sædvanlige, blandede livshistorier, som består af sammenrodede små og store og gode og onde episoder [...] Sammenblandingen giver uvægerligt kortslutninger. Jeg har undgået dem. Derfor er jeg frisk, og derfor har jeg ingen alder. Jeg har valgt den lige linie. Menneskene selv vælger jeg ikke at vælge [...] Jeg har spillet hård eller from for at kunne være i fred. Jeg har delt mig for at få lov til at være mig selv. Jeg har spillet velbjærget og nødlidende og masser af andre roller. Som de fleste vel gør.’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 285-6)

Verner has been obliged to split himself, playing various roles, in order to be himself, although it is hard not to see him as a passive portal for the dreams of others. What is also interesting here is the insistence on ‘sammenblanding’, the mixing or weaving together of life-histories small and great, the very essence of a society, which, he says, results in ‘kortslutninger’, and which he has avoided. Though he hints at an active role in the (re)creation of stories that may lie behind a chance remark (‘[s]omme tider kan tilfældige bemærkninger åbne for ganske betydelige historier’ (288)), his account of how voices penetrate his consciousness as he sleepily polishes the floor of the *plejehjem* lies on the verge of magical realism, suggesting that his role may be more passive than creative:

‘Jeg skubber og trækker. Og folk puffer til mig. Stemmerne begynder at ramme mig, først som enlige, små sten, siden som haglbyger. Jeg kan ikke væрге mig imod dem, og jeg forstår ikke, hvad de vil mig. Jeg er for tæt til at forstå og høre [sic] dem fra bunden af en brønd [...] Morgentimen er uvirkelig med sin stærke virkelighed’ (290-2)

Staying with the idea of Verner as a passive portal, through which different identities and stories can flow, we can see him as *both* a member of the community and a cipher for the textual mediation of memories. As he says, he has split himself in order to exist as he does; he can be both things at the same time.

It is generally agreed that individual memories have a problematic and shifting relationship to the event they purport to describe. Halbwachs, as we know, denies even the definition of memory proper to the kind of unprocessed re-presentations of personal experience that flit through our heads. His interest in dreams as the raw stuff of memories, which are elsewhere constituted by social interaction and narrative emplotment, tallies well with Verner's account of his nocturnal rounds in the *plejehjem*, when the old people speak to him fragmentedly from the remnants of their consciousness through the fog of dreams and sheer senility:

‘den nye beboer Barbe Hermansen ligger og mumler ganske svagt. Hun har stadig ikke erkendt, at hun er flyttet hjemmefra. Eller at hun er kommet på plejehjem for at blive. Men inde bag den blåhvide pandeskal og de tykke øjenlåg et sted har hun i hemmelighed nogle stærke sanser i behold [...] I dag forstår jeg ikke, hvad [Inge Marie] siger i søvne [...] Jeg husker, hvad hun fortalte en morgen, hun lige var vågnet.’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 291-2)

‘[I]f our dreams evoke images that have the appearance of memories, these images are introduced in a fragmented state,’ writes Halbwachs. ‘Almost completely detached from the systems of social representations, [these] images are nothing more than raw materials, capable of entering into all sorts of random combinations.’ (Halbwachs 1992: 41-2). If Verner is seen as a fabulator, who works with this ‘raw stuff of dreams’ to re-construct a history of his community, he is certainly in tune with the *Zeitgeist* (his episode is dated 1996); commenting on *I dag*, Frandsen notes how its fragmented construction mirrors the way in which we, allegedly, ascertain reality in the postmodern world:

‘Virkeligheden træder ikke frem for bevidstheden som en sammenhæng, men som stumper og fragmenter eller som uendelig mange små historier, der så at sige er synkront til stede og lige virkelige.’ (Frandsen 2000: 219)

### 3.2. Ordering memories and hi/stories

But, regardless of whether Verner is an ‘active’ narrator or not, some organising logic has engendered the chronological and telescopic arrangement of these episodes. The fragmentation that Frandsen highlights is complicated by the insistence on the naïve, methodical situating of the ‘stumper og fragmenter’ along a line representing the passage of time. On a very simplistic level, this transforms the fragments into hi/stories. The establishment of meaningful narrative sequences is the essence of remembering, rather than merely experiencing disjointed images of the past; this process is the basis of psychoanalysis (Connerton 1989: 26), as well as the development between dreaming and social memory alluded to by Halbwachs. And the novelist A.S. Byatt has written of the compelling nature of this ordering process and its role in the creation of fiction:

‘Certainly I remember being obsessed as a child by a kind of “glittering” quality about certain experiences, usually without deep importance in what I thought of as the narrative of my life [...] It is not too much to say that these experiences were as tormenting as they were delightful, until I, the person who underwent them, formed the project of being a writer – because only the act of writing gave them a glimmer of the importance they had in life, and thus gave them a place, a form and an order which made sense of them.’ (Byatt 1998: 47)

The individual episodes in *I dag* could be considered narrative sequences, but the ‘emplotment’ of the novel as a whole is, as established above, doubtful. For the moment, we might usefully distinguish between a *micro-level narrative* (at the level of the individual episodes) and a *macro-level chronology* (the text as a whole).



The time-line in *I dag* is, of course, de-stabilised by the incursion of the telescopic moments-in-time narrated in the present tense, and by the instances of RI. The uneasy interplay of these three temporalities in the text render Frandsen's notion of stories, by virtue of their fragmented nature, being 'synkront til stede' too one-dimensional. While the stories in *Byen og verden*, a novel which dispenses with chronology as a means of emplotment, holding all its texts in a field of deferred causality, might be satisfyingly described as 'synkront til stede', *I dag* seems to flag its insistence on an ostensibly orthodox chronology in order to undermine the latter's hold on the historical imagination.

### **3.3. Mediating memories and hi/stories**

Another ambivalence in the text, again connected to the workings of memory, has to do with presence as well as the present. Halbwachs' position on the distinction between the raw stuff of individually-experienced memory and socially-contextualised memory has been discussed, but there are other distinctions to be made regarding the mediation of memory and its 'truth-value'. LaCapra writes of 'primary' memory, that of a person who has lived through a particular event, and which 'almost invariably involves lapses relating to forms of denial, repression, suppression, and evasion.' Critical work, by analysts, historians, or life-writers on primary memory results in 'secondary' memory (1998: 20). To a certain extent, a pure primary memory is an impossibility, claims LaCapra, since it 'has always already been affected by elements not deriving from the experience itself' (21). The recognition of the inaccessibility of an unmediated recollection of an event for the subject is also present in Freud and subsequent psychological research. Here, the distinction is between

‘field’ memory, where the subject participates in the memory as it was originally lived, and an ‘observer’ memory, in which the scene is replayed with the subject as an observer of herself, within the scene. These can co-exist; again, we see the likelihood of a mediation of the more ‘immediate’ version of memory by external factors or later interpretations (Middleton & Woods 2000: 89). The field/observer split has an obvious parallel in the position of the ‘ideal ethnographer’ discussed above, but it is also frequently mirrored in literature by the use of the first and third person, respectively (ibid.).

The oscillation between voices, persons and tenses in *I dag*, therefore, is suggestive of, in particular, Verner’s double and split status as observer and participant, and, more generally, of the nebulous character of recollection. Memories are more likely to behave as texts, with the quality of what Barthes calls ‘stereographic plurality’ (1977: 159), a weave of intertexts and influences, than as narratives with an identifiable narrator.

The following passages illustrate the subjective and temporal instability inherent in *I dag*’s narrative. A memorable moment in Ruth Iversen’s life is related thus, demonstrating how memories can be accorded changing ‘flavours’ over time and circumstance:

‘Hans lette og stærke hånd strejfede hendes kind og gled ned over hendes bløde bryster. Ikke mere. Hurtigt og uvirkeligt. Hun var lykkelig. *Og hun kunne genkalde sig øjeblikkets glæde lige til den dag, han døde. Og glæden forandrede sig til taknemmelighed over at have kendt ham og over, at han aldrig forandrede sig og blev gammel.*’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 89)

After the man's death, Ruth's memory might be said to shift from a field memory (sensual reverie) to an observer memory (re-interpretation of the event as a remembrance of a man who will never grow older). In the course of the first sentence above, the point of view seems to shift from Ruth's sense-memory of his 'lette og stærke hånd' to the man's own sense-memory of her 'bløde' breasts, although the latter could be a narcissistic reconstruction of his sensation in Ruth's imagination. In any case, the point of view also alters in the course of this episode as a whole, when the narrative homes in on 'klokken ti', from Ruth to her fiancé, Kurt, whose appreciation of the object of his affection is altogether more basic:

'Hun er overvældende køn. Han må smile og røre [...] - Så er vi forlovede, siger han uden at tro på det. – Vi er forlovede.  
*Måske ødelægger han alting, fordi han ikke tror på det. Mens hun slider og kæmper for deres virksomhed, begynder han at drikke. Afslutningen på historien virker allerede mere troværdig end begyndelsen og nutiden gør.'*  
(93-4)

While the RI is in possession of the facts about Ruth and Kurt's marriage over the years, the use of the word 'nutiden' maintains the temporal connection to what is going on in the bedroom at ten o'clock on 28 October 1968. Another interesting point here is the ironic reference to a 'troværdig' story, which seems to refer both to Kurt's disbelief and the speculation that his destructive behaviour was therefore a self-fulfilling prophecy (a little cod-psychology from the narrator!) and to the broader narrative impulse, that hi/stories should have a beginning, middle and end.

On 29 juni 1989, we are immersed in a moment which is later shown as remembered:

'Hun ser kun geranier. Hun står ved plantebordet og prikler sammen med sin mand og sin mor og en kone fra byen. De ser kun geranier. hun lugter og smager og spiser og rører kun geranier.' (235)

[...]

‘Hun ser ikke geranierne og sin mand og sin mor og konen fra byen bøjet over dem, *som hun så dem i går*. Hun ser dem gennem en omvendt kikkert. Fjerne og skarpe som metalsplinter.’ (238, my emphasis)

This is as close as we get to an unmediated memory, the shift from a moment ‘in the field’ to that remembrance of that same moment as an observer, but without any particular narrative contextualisation. This episode concerns a schizophrenic woman, whose every movement is punctuated by visions and memories of a dead film star, with whom she is obsessed; the nature of her illness seems to prevent her from experiencing chains of signification, or coherence in time. The inclusion of this mentally-ill woman’s view of the world, and indeed of other pathological world-views (e.g. Christian’s OCD, 114-8), can be argued to link the disjunctive spacetimes of this novel with the parallel drawn by Fredric Jameson between the mind of the schizophrenic and the postmodern experience of time and space:

‘the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time [...] In our present context, this experience suggests the following: first, the breakdown of temporality suddenly releases this present of time from all the activities and intentionalities that might focus it and make it a space of praxis; thereby isolated, that present suddenly engulfs the subject with undescrivable vividness, a materiality of perception properly overwhelming’ (1991: 27)

We shall return to the importance of the idea of the materiality of perception later on, in the context of the postnational model reader’s engagement with the text. For the moment, Jameson’s focus on the pathological postmodern experience of time speaks to the fragmented and yet multidimensional ‘pure and unrelated presents in time’ that constitute *I dag*.

An example of another spatio-temporal pathology, one initiated by trauma, comes towards the end of the novel. It is July 2, 1994, and Martine Sørensen is walking down a country lane:

‘Hun så ud i lyset for enden af stien og tænkte ikke på noget. En gren svirpede hende i ansigtet med lodne blad. Hun var ikke glad og ikke trist. *Senere tænkte Martine Sørensen, at hun havde været lykkelig, fordi ulykken endnu lige netop ikke var sket.*’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 267)

The RI comes in this case the very moment before Martine is raped by an unnamed assailant, and contrasts the neutral emotional quality of a point in time which in retrospect takes on a quality of happiness because it is time elapsed before the watershed event. The temporal disjunction reveals how memories are coloured by remembrance and re-interpretation; the text can present both possibilities. This part of the passage suggests an omniscient narrator, privy to the most microscopic details of Martine’s walk, and to her state of mind before and after the event. Elsewhere, after the rapist’s appearance on the path, the point of view shifts slightly towards free indirect discourse:

‘Men hun så nu, hvad hun allerede vidste, at det ikke var en fejltagelse fra hans side [...] Han havde ventet på hende. Han havde ventet i alle de fireogtyve år, hun havde levet, mens hun legede i bedstefars have [...] Mens hun lærte at læse og spille badminton...’ (ibid.)

Martine creates a teleological narrative of her life leading up to this defining moment, but the disjunction contained in ‘hun så nu, hvad hun allerede vidste’ is ambiguous in suggesting that she already knew what she realised a split second after the man appeared, i.e. that he meant to ambush her; and also that she already knew her whole life had been leading up to this event, an interpretation which was, most feasibly, constructed retrospectively. Many idyllic childhood impressions become observer

memories for Martine – in a sense, she sees her life flash before her eyes – and the memory of the rape is inserted into a narrative order, thus becoming a secondary memory.

The episodes in *I dag* are always already mediated through Verner (if we accept him as a cipher for the range of points of view presented), and therefore ‘secondary’, in LaCapra’s terms; there is no first-person narration (other than in Verner’s own episode) in *I dag*. In fact, there is no ‘primary’ memory anterior to its representation in *I dag*. An obvious difference between novel and memoir is the declared immediacy of the latter, the ‘direct access’ to the writer’s outpourings of lived experience with some basis in reality, but the concern in this novel with the manipulation of the raw stuff of experience by its teller(s) renders relative its own fictiveness. The pure experience of characters’ memory is glimpsed through the interference of its ‘translation’ into this particular constellation of re-tellings of stories, whatever its basis in event in the first place. If we consider history and memory, as discussed earlier, to be distinct but mutually-defining, then it is worth considering a parallel drawn by some theorists between the element of forgetting that trauma always entails to the ultimate inaccessibility of an unmediated experience of historical event. We are treading on marshy ground here, for historians are sensitive to any poststructural challenge to the evenementiality of events, that is, the question of whether Hiroshima or the Gulf War ‘happened’ in some material way extraneous to their textual representations. While no responsible theorist would deny the very real suffering visited on human beings by the events later ‘constructed’ in the sense of being documented, recorded, sifted, ‘told’, there is a sense in which ‘the materiality of the historical event is *only ever available* through the relay and concomitant deferral that

is the condition of the materiality of signifiers.’ (Wolfreys 2002: 128, emphasis in original). The writing and reading of history is essential ‘precisely because the historical occurrence is neither fully perceivable in the event nor subsequently accessible after the fact of its occurrence.’ (ibid.). Trauma, and its effects, then, become a metaphor for history, or at least for the traumatic events of history. We will return to consider trauma in relation to memory and the body below. For the time being, we turn to the relationship between textual and non-textual forms of memory and history.

#### **4. Materiality, memory and history**

Rather than identify Verner as the narrator, Frandsen interprets the shift from third- to first-person narration and from past to present tense in the final episode as a signal that ‘vi er fremme ved os selv’ (2000: 219); we have caught up with the present time. But of course, in almost every episode, there is a passage told in the present tense; every day is (or has been) a ‘today’, which is always, to quote Bhabha out of context, ‘poised on the fissures of the present [...] becoming the national past’ (1994: 142). The jolt of moving from past to present tense within one episode might be seen as mimicking the defamiliarising effect of the occasional (pseudo-schizophrenic) realisation that the present is only a knife-edge between the past and the future. Middleton and Woods’ intriguing summary of the questions literature asks about the past – ‘what it is, *where it is*, and how we can imagine it’ (2000:1, my emphasis) – makes explicit a primeval instinct that most of us have regarding the past, that it exists somewhere and can, potentially, be accessed.

#### 4.1. Mnemotechnics

Studies of memory, however, tend to emphasise that the past neither recurs nor exists outside memory and mnemotechnics (the recording technologies for experiences); and, by extension, the past is always textual, always mediated through language. Halbwachs summarises: ‘everything seems to indicate that the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present’ (1992: 39-40); thus, the past, as ‘memory’ or as ‘history’, has no materiality, it is not ‘there’. Connerton comes at the problem from the opposite direction, in a sense, insisting that ‘our experience of the present very largely depends on our knowledge of the past’ (1989: 2). *I dag* engages with this problem in the sense that it is concerned with mnemotechnics: the myriad recording technologies, or ‘inscribing practices’ (Connerton 1989: 72), that make possible the translation of lived experience into some form of text, whether written, photographic, filmic, or digitised. The episodes of *I dag* are centred on everyday life, and yet most contain some reference to events in the world outside the town as they come to people’s attention in newspapers, on television, and so on. This is how a literate society creates, records and disseminates social memory, hitherto limited by the necessity of oral transmission, over ever widening stretches of space and time (Middleton and Woods 2000: 5). The chronological ‘realism’ of this novel is strengthened by the inclusion of such events in the narrative, for they are verifiable as accurate in established history; the events of everyday life can be plotted along the same corridor of historical time as newsworthy ones. Consequently, the creation of ‘eventness’ is at stake; happenings are constituted as ‘history’ in the public sphere because they are recorded, mediated in some way, and are registered by readers and viewers as events of relative magnitude (‘history in the making’). This is where History meets memory, for charting the registration of events reveals how social



(collective) and individual memories coalesce and diverge, how official and unofficial versions of events support and subvert each other, and how developing technologies of memory affect this process. As Middleton and Woods muse, the last half-century – the period covered by *I dag* – has seen such accelerated progress in mnemotechnics and spatio-temporal experience that we may not yet recognise all of them as such: ‘what looks like historical amnesia may be misrecognition of new technologies of memory which seem like white noise to those expecting memory to play by traditional scales’ (2000: 9). I will argue, later, that the novel in general and *I dag* in particular can also be construed as a mnemotechnic. For the moment, though, we can see how the media to which the townspeople in *I dag* have access changes over time:

‘Posten kom ind med et pust fra verden [...] Hun kiggede på et foto af den store mur midt i Berlin og læste Willy Brandt, McMillan og Kennedys udtalelser om den. Et utydeligt foto, som ikke gav nogen forestilling om størrelsesforholdene.  
‘Det kønne barn, Birgitte Sørensen, kom efter nitroglycerin til sin bedstemor.’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 47)

In this case, the photograph of the Berlin Wall gives the date in question (16 August 1961) a mythic significance; this is an historical event in the making, out in the world, which is absorbed by Augusta Gade as she serves at the counter of her Chemist’s shop. A sense of spatial disjunction (the post comes in from the outside world) is countered by the construction of an implicit ‘meanwhile’ (a customer comes in). The registration of such events ties domestic time to world time in the individual imagination; it is a commonplace to observe that most people can remember where they were and what they were doing when they heard various pieces of earth-shattering news, and this retrospectively creates an awareness of simultaneity across global time.

One RI in the narrative comments directly on the attribution of meaning to events by television:

*‘Og tv-stationer er gode til at finde emner og forenkle dem, så alle kan være for eller imod. De vælger en enkelt forureningskilde, en enkelt atomprøvesprængning, mens stråler og gift fosser ud overalt, én krig, mens folkemord og overgreb huserer alle steder. De skaber orden i kaos, skiller godt og ondt.’ (ibid.: 39)*

The flood of images is always filtered, metonymic. And the codes of broadcasting are understood by viewers, as this finely-tuned appreciation of which slots are most prestigious indicates:

*‘Birgitte Sørensen blev på sin tyveårs fødselsdag gift med en hjertekirurg, som, før en ny finanslov i 1994, påtog sig at fremlægge kirurgernes sag i fjernsynets gode sendetid mellem reklamerne. Søndag blev det dog ikke. Det blev fredag aften klokken otte.’ (47)*

Three decades later, on 30 June 1992, news is constantly updated on the teletext service, so that the nameless protagonist is compelled to check and re-check the headlines, without distinguishing between the significance of the Bosnian war and sport: ‘[d]et havde ingen betydning, om det var fantasi eller sandhed. Hun havde ikke mulighed for at gennemskue propagandaen og prøvede ikke på det.’ (254) Her appreciation of the television she spends her days watching is enhanced by the gossip and reviews in television magazines, and the televisual images she receives flash by in no apparent order:

*‘Hun spiste endnu en is. Teksten den samme. Reklamerne var gode som altid. De ramte i solar plexus. Smukt hår, smukke tænder, smukke klæder. Den franske præsident besøger Sarajevo. IRA overgiver sig aldrig. Skilsmisse i det engelske kongehus. Flydende sæbe fjerner alle pletter. De lette pletter og de farlige pletter. Læskedrik giver energi og succes.’ (257)*

This episode is one of the few not to include a description of a point in time on the day in question, as if the constant flux of images – a life lived in a world mediated fragmentedly by television and magazines – has the effect of lifting the viewer out of the stream of identifiable moments-in-time. Between 1961 and 1992 we have moved from a situation where images of world events and reportage of international reactions to them could quickly be disseminated through the press, leaving room for doubt as to the communicative force of the image (the photograph of the Berlin Wall is unable to show its sheer scale), to a situation in which potential events collapse in upon themselves because they do not have time to signify before they are disseminated and caught up in the accelerated stream of images. Within this text, then, we witness a move that follows Baudrillard's thought on the increasing tendency of events to 'strike'. As early as 1981 he argued that so-called historical events (wars, strikes, hold-ups, etc.) were simulations, 'in that they are already inscribed in the decoding and orchestration rituals of the media, anticipated in their presentation and the possible consequences.' (Baudrillard 1994a: 21). This is in evidence in the media and political anticipation of the significance of the Berlin Wall. By 1992, we are within reach of a further development in Baudrillard's interpretation of the behaviour of simulated images: human history has reached escape velocity in the run-up to the millennium, so that events are blown 'out of time' and circulated and digitised indefinitely. Alternatively, history may be said to have been slowed down by the inertia of the dense social masses and circulation of commodities and circuits (Baudrillard 1994b: 1-7).

So we might say that the novel is concerned not only with 'major and minor' events, to echo Benjamin, but also with the medium of their registration. Thus the various

facets of the prism of the ‘End of History’ are at work in *I dag*: the culmination of socio-economic progress (complicated, here, by the trope of the Welfare State – see below), the declared postmodern scepticism towards History’s grand narratives, and the Baudrillardian paradox of the acceleration and inertia of history, the simulatedness of events, towards the end of the twentieth century. Taken to its extreme, such an approach to late twentieth-century history bleeds memory dry, for events are seen to signify only to the extent that they are inscribed in some media and circulated, and collective or social memory is said to have disappeared, to be replaced only with a hyperreal history. Marc Augé’s work on the non-places of supermodernity (1997), Baudrillard’s excited pessimism about the retro nostalgia of historical cinema and theme-parks (1994a), and even Pierre Nora’s analytic of *lieux de mémoire* (1984) are based on the idea that some kind of simulated, mediated history has usurped the place of ‘natural’ social memory. In any case, the materiality of the event – history, the real – is swallowed up in simulacra and the circulation of images and messages.

#### **4.2. Memory and the body**

Although the traces of these tendencies are to be found in *I dag* as the century progresses, their counterpoint in this novel is an insistence on a mediation of the world through something other than information technology: as Torben Madsen (1991) puts it, ‘[y]ou can taste [Grønfeldt’s universe] and feel it tickling and scratching’. History and memory seem still to have a home in the body and the landscape. The television addict in the passage above can certainly feel the effects of its hyperreality in her veins, particularly when watching athletics:

‘Hun opdagede ved at se på atleterne, på de kloge og smukke, at hun kunne løbe og flyve i halvlyset, hade, tilbede, dræbe. [...] Hun mærkede det i kroppen, skiftede køn og svævede over jorden. Og skiftede køn igen.

hun havde altid handlet i tankerne. Nu var hun i stand til at handle i virkeligheden.’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 253)

Connerton’s contribution to the debate on ‘how societies remember’ (this is the title of his book) is to extend the domain of social memory to the body, thus re-affirming its material trace. He distinguishes between (a) incorporating practices of memory, which require the presence of a human body, ranging from a smile, through posture (e.g. linked to social rank) to choreographed commemorative movements, and (b) inscribing practices of memory, the modern technologies of recording, maintaining and retrieving information (1989: 72), which, nevertheless, assume the involvement of some incorporating practice in the process of inscription (76). Clearly, such practices of memory implicate an individual body, but are inextricably implicated in the social, in an ongoing negotiation of norms of behaviour. ‘[T]he past,’ claims Connerton, ‘is, as it were, sedimented in the body.’ (72). The extension of the role of both incorporating and inscribing practices to the national (rather than more broadly ‘social’) sphere of operations is feasible enough, if one interprets national belonging as one dimension of a concentric arrangement of socio-cultural groupings pertinent to the individual as pedagogical object and performative subject.

Indeed, Connerton makes explicit the link he sees between changing inscriptional practices of historiography in the nineteenth century and the national community. The privileging of a ‘historically tutored memory’ (Connerton 1989: 16), under the auspices of the new science of history – he uses Germany as an example – was part and parcel of a national project which sought to harness the ‘unreflective traditional memory’ (ibid.) that could not by itself cause to have established a political national identity. But, where History thus marked out an exclusive domain of rational truth for itself, nation-building also relies on ‘what goes without saying’ (ibid.:18). For

example, commemorative practices involving some kind of bodily performance can implicate individuals in a national community, or exclude deviants from it. The *fællessang* during the Nazi Occupation of Denmark, and the painting of *dannebrog* on the face of today's football supporters are both rituals involving the body which can be construed as collective performances where the national is being explicitly celebrated. Such practices have been variously orchestrated by elites or media to a greater or lesser extent. These are both instances of the 'accumulative practice of the same' (34), whereby the meaning of the action, for the individual as for the collective, is interpreted in terms of social convention, or legitimacy (35). The various practices of eating, dressing and speaking which constitute *det viborgske* or *det udanske* in *Byen og verden*, discussed in chapter 3, illustrate the shifting limits of social acceptability of incorporating practices, and, of course, the shifting communities of belonging which they signify.

One can, of course, belong to different mnemonic communities of different scales (Kansteiner 2002: 189). Just how ambiguous the belonging expressed by such practices can be is illustrated by an interesting passage in *I dag*, where a teenager is anticipating her Confirmation:

'Hun levede i forventning. Hele tiden med en fornemmelse af at stige opad og opad og nærme sig byen nedefra. Fra barndommen blev hun løftet ind i det rigtige liv og blev en af dem, uden at have gjort sig fortjent til det. Hun blev løftet i sin egen krop og fik flere og flere kræfter, mens katekismen og trosbekendelsen sang i hovedet. Hun glædede sig til kjolen, til festen, til flag og hurra, til cykel, ur og cigaretter. [...] Hun smilte og hilste på en anden måde på vej gennem byen, og den smilte og hilste på en anden måde på hende.' (Grønfeldt 1998: 37)

The temporal and psychological journey from childhood to adulthood is here set in the spatial terms of the route the girl takes on her new bicycle, itself a marker of the

rite of passage that is her Confirmation. In both senses, she is aware of being propelled in an upward direction, and both dimensions of the experience of being lifted are felt 'i sin egen krop'. The religious teaching and litanies that will make her a part of the Church also mark her as a new member of the town community, and, indeed, the rituals and symbols associated with the Confirmation are a blend of things to put on her putatively adult body or consume (the dress, the watch, the cigarettes), and group practices (the party, the flag-flying, the hurrahs, the ritual of Confirmation itself); the flag-flying, in particular, ties the religious, familial and local communities to the national community. If she and the town now greet each other 'på en anden måde', it is because her participation in the most fundamental of social incorporating practices – waving and smiling – are performed on the basis of her adulthood.

#### **4.3. Social and textual memory**

The above passage is a representation in text of the incorporating practices centred on a particular rite of passage that initiates the young adult into the local, spiritual and national communities. Although Connerton recognises that inscribing practices are dependent on incorporating practices for their input – he provides the example of the imposition of 'correct' posture and other bodily norms instilled in schoolchildren as they learn to write (77) – he does not discuss the possibility that incorporating practices might also be an 'output' of a text. What he does explicitly mention is the necessity of particular incorporating practices among cinema spectators, in order that the eye-subject might properly displace itself from the body and follow the movement of the camera, resulting in a two-way street: '[t]he inscriptional practice of cinema makes possible, and is in turn made possible by, the incorporating practice of the cinema spectator' (78).

Can the reader of a literary text also be brought into the equation? What is the role of the body and its practices – the incorporating element of inscribing practices - in the world of the text, where individual and social memory, it would seem, is mediated through language alone? A.S.Byatt has written of her own experience of weaving memories together into a mnemonic textual network in a very sensuous way. She gives two metaphors for the process, the first of which is the preening and smoothing of feathers, and the second of which is the dredging for iconic images with a net. Both of these images, she claims,

‘are metaphors for something I do *feel* going on in my blood and brain and nervous system when I sit down to try to work. [...] there are – before thought structures – rhythmic memories, and iconic visual memories, which must be allowed to form and be preened, so to speak. [...] Rhythmic memories are to do with the blood, and with language.’ (Byatt 1998: 65, emphasis in original)

Middleton and Woods reject unequivocally the exclusion of non-textual practices of memory from the workings of literary texts:

‘The behavioural memories of performance obviously play a large part in drama, but so too do the little understood corporeal memories of verbal sound (as they also do in poetry – poetry readings exploit this) and kinesthetic memories of performed or imagined actions.’ (2000: 6)

Middleton and Woods adopt the term ‘textual memory’ in their study, they say, in order to draw a distinction between the social memory explored by, on the one hand, Connerton and others (including its elements of inscription) and, on the other, their own focus, which is the workings of the textuality of memory in literature (ibid: 6), and its relation to contemporary discourses on the nature of history and memory.



What is especially intriguing here is their openness to the possibility of a ‘kinesthetic’ memory, which suggests not only, as Connerton does, that inscribing practices are replete with socially-determined incorporating practices, but that actions or sensations represented in a text in some way speak to social memory outside the text. In other words, we can start to think about some form of output of incorporating practice.

Britta Timm Knudsen (2002a) suggests that the question of how to represent, in language, corporeal, sensuous experience, as well as trauma (see below) – that is, the problem of the limits of representation – has become a foremost concern of Danish fiction in the late 1990s. Knudsen concentrates on the short story genre, but since her arguments concern not so much form or structure as representation in text and reader response, her ideas are also applicable to other genres, including the novel; moreover, the distinction between *kortprosa* and novel has been rendered hazy by the formal experimentation in recent Danish literature. What is at stake thematically in the new realism of the 1990s, writes Knudsen, elsewhere, is not the marxian ‘why’ of the 1970s, but a ‘how’, a micro-sociology of the everyday (2001:1), and this spills over symptomatically into form, a development that could be argued to encompass the *punkroman*, as well as the fragmented texts represented by *Byen og verden, I dag*, and even, to a less radical extent, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*. More crucially, the position of *det skrivende jeg* as ‘eye’-witness is becoming more concretised, so that one can speak of *mellemfelter*, points of contact between text and audience that create an effect of reality grounded in what the body ‘knows’. Taking as an extreme example the craze for autobiography and memoir in the 1990s, Knudsen argues that what is being established is a new ‘contract’ with the reader, who becomes a stand-in for a therapist: ‘når det medialiseres knytter betroelsen an til en ny

indskrivning i et socialt fællesskab' (2002b:230). It is the intimate content of the memoirs and the anonymity of the reader that creates 'et nyt affektivt fællesskab' between the roles of victim and witness (ibid.), played by narrator (Knudsen uses the term 'skribent') and reader respectively. Middleton and Woods seem to be moving towards the same idea – the creation of a type of community involving the reader – with their notion of the text as a 'prosthetic social memory' in which readers can 'increase and correct their own limited cognitive strengths and participate in a public memorial space' (2000: 5).

This return to 'the real' – Knudsen's latest anthology is entitled *Virkelighedshunger* (2002b) – is, then, not so much a reaction against poststructural orthodoxy, but a natural shift of emphasis away from language games and textual Chinese boxes to a play with levels of reality:

'det afgørende er, at manglen på fortolkning IKKE resulterer i teksternes pegende gestus på sig selv som simulerende, evigt fordoblende skinverdener, men i at læseren sanseligt forbindes med de overfladerealistiske teksters intensive >>reelle<< momenter' (Knudsen 2002b:231)

'Reality', then, retains its slipperiness as contingent and multiple, even simulated, and, argues Knudsen, the difficulty of approximating a grasp of the 'real' in text frequently results in a grotesque or surreal register, which we have already witnessed in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* (ibid.). 'Reality' cannot be grasped, it can only be sensed. In typically dense but rewarding prose, Tom Cohen joins this area of debate, and connects it to the question of temporality, the 'pastness' of the past, outlining the puzzle of the materiality of the referent of history:

'One is always, tradition suggests, after "materiality" – that is, not only in pursuit of a promised ground or ontology that is also worldly, associable

with reference and the “thing”, historical process or analysis, a real, but temporally after (as the model of the hunt suggests too), as though the term were bound nonetheless to linguistic traces, to something anterior to figurative systems’ (Cohen 2002: 279)

What Cohen is feeling towards is an (a)materiality – the title of his essay, in fact, is ‘(a)material criticism’. This is an approach to reading that side-steps the disavowal of the ‘classic metaphysical monuments’ (280) that assume the presence of a real (‘something anterior to physical systems’) and appeals instead to developing technologies of inscription. New means of recording memory, for example, claims Cohen, will require us to re-think our conceptions of the ‘literary’, the ‘event’, and temporality. He roots his argument in Benjamin’s programme of materialistic historiography (Benjamin 1999: 254), and in his figure of the constellation more generally, which, claims Cohen, suggests that the ‘event’ can be conceived of as a half-way house between material and non-material; that is, as an (a)material phenomenon ‘bound to inscription, memory, temporality, and political intervention’ (Cohen 2002: 281). As is clear from the epigram at the beginning of this chapter, an orthodox, linear ordering of history is rejected by Benjamin in favour of a ‘constellation’ formed by the historian’s era along with an earlier one (Benjamin 1999: 255). All this can help us to think the time of *I dag*, which, more perplexed than a postmodern ‘fragmented’ time, seems to insist on the mediation of the past through a constantly slipping present, and on the circulation of images in society. The memories enumerated and embroidered in the text are displayed as both anterior and immediate for the narrator; the figure of a constellation allows for a flexible arrangement of moving bodies in time and space. The nodes of the constellation, moreover, have the character of memories: not material, but not entirely immaterial, since they are mediated through bodily practices and collective interaction. In the

textual world of *I dag*, the engagement of the (postnational model) reader in the text, I will argue below, implicates both bodily practices and social memory at the site of inscription.

#### 4.4. Building bridges to the reader

Knudsen's hypothesis ties together two problems implicit in the above: the materiality of events, and their temporality. By searching for the core, or essence ('kerne') of past events at the site of the body, the 'pastness' of the past is subsumed into the general question of the accessibility of experience. The remembered event is 'bound to inscription' (Cohen 2002: 182), but it is not *only* inscribed; it is also incorporated in the body. Therefore, *det skrivende jeg* in text is primarily constituted visually and spatially ('visuelt-rumligt') rather than narratively (Knudsen 2002b:231). In constituting itself through recounting memories, that is, events experienced visually and spatially, it builds a bridge to the reader:

'teksterne beskæftiger sig ofte med erindring, fordi sansningen af den umiddelbare livsverden går gennem erindringen (billedet) og fordi det rumlige perspektiv udspiller sig relationelt mellem tekst og læser [...] i en sanselig relation, hvor læseren sanser noget, der ikke sanktioneres inden for tekstens narrative og symbolske univers, men som alligevel har betydning som intenst, strålende moment.' (Knudsen 2002b:233)

In *I dag*, these moments of intensity are anchored in the novel's very precise chronology. Indeed, Frandsen comes close to the same formulation when he describes the driving force behind Grønfeldt's work as '[e]n intens oplevelse af det evigt flygtende øjeblik, som [hun] søger at få adgang til eller at fastholde gennem sproget.' (Frandsen 2001: 210) That the dates and times at which the episodes take place in the world of the text are identifiable may seem at first to challenge Knudsen's down-

grading of narrative development in favour of the visual-spatial dimension. However, as argued throughout this chapter, the ‘real-time’ chronology has the effect of undermining its own linearity and very viability. These episodes are not beads on a rosary, but moments which spill out into space and are intersected with the time of the naïve historian. Interestingly, the comments of one reviewer of *I dag* highlight another, related, effect of the realist chronology, which is that the dates become iconic and therefore interchangeable for readers, depending on their content. Pia Vigh (1998) candidly explains how the reader superimposes her own traumatic experience onto comparable events in the novel, exchanging one date for another:

‘Disse lyn af øjeblikke, af sårmærker og erindringer bærer i sig en voldsom metonymisk ekspansionskraft. For hvert lyn, der slår ned i mig og mærker min erindring, fortæller jeg min egen historie. Hvad enten jeg kan lokalisere og benævne en virknings nedslagspunkt eller ej, så er det et supplement; det er det lynlimt, jeg tilføjer det allerede læst. Det, der i Grønfeldts roman er første september 1964 [Vigh actually quotes from the episode 18 marts 1965] er for mig første juli 1989. Derfor er *I dag* et helt og helende episk værk, sin tilsyneladende brudthed til trods.’

I can also personally attest that this reaction works retrospectively, after reading the novel; the event which I project onto the episode 18 March 1965 occurred in May 2001. The reader’s affective response is tied up in her own stories, which resemble some of those in the novel; the episodes are therefore both metonymic and interactive, in the sense that they encourage a supplementary ‘tilføjelse’ out of the reader’s own memory. The moments ‘expand’ not only through the space and time of the text, but also by knitting themselves to the reader’s memory. Again, Vigh hits metaphorically on the corporeal quality of particular points in the text: ‘Disse sårmærker kan aldrig fanges i en analyse eller i en særligt begavet læsning. *De bløder fra en erindring*’ (ibid., my emphasis). As Knudsen’s work suggests, this phenomenon will be strongest where some kind of trauma is associated with the event; not because memories of

traumatic events are clearest, but precisely the opposite. Trauma is the epitome of the ungraspable event because it causes a break in the personal narrative, a lacuna in recollection, and a compulsive repetition; in short, it challenges the very basis of historical knowledge, as well as the impulse to order it in a linear and continuous fashion. In what follows, we will trace the concern of *I dag* with these two interconnected aspects of memory: its rootedness in the body, and trauma – and their production of a textual community.

#### **4.4.1. The body**

The environment – weather, smells, food, flowers, other bodies – is felt on and in the body, and leaves its mark over time. *I dag* is particularly dense with descriptions of the registration of these environmental factors on the body of the protagonist. As we know, each episode is temporally disjointed, and so the textual subject must constitute itself, as Knudsen argues, by orienting itself visually and in space, rather than in an extended narrative. This complicates Verner's purported status as narrator of the patients' memories, for the episodes are told in the third person, but have the qualities – sense memory – one would associate with field memory, rather than observer memory.

The novel opens with the movement of summer over the landscape, and narrows its focus to the man's sensation of warmth on his skin:

‘Sommeren kom svævende fra øst. Gennem tørre strå og valmuer og oksetunger, gennem det brede græs, gennem kornet . Den trillede glimtende sandskorn foran sig og suste i poplerne [...] Solen varmede gennem tøjet, og han ventede lidt endnu’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 5)

Here we have the evidence of most of the senses: touch (warmth of the sun, dryness of straw), sight (glimmering sand), and sound (rustling in the trees). This is entirely typical of the majority of episodes: weather and season, and their effect on the body, are always established, sometimes sensually, sometimes more philosophically:

‘Hun åbnede vinduet og mærkede høstmorgenens mod huden.’ (57)

‘Forårsluften vældede gennem gaden, gennem kastanietræerne ved kirkegården, gennem sandet på asfalten [...] Forår og sejr hørte sammen [...] Han trådte ud på tinghusets trappe og smilte til alle og følte sig ung og stærk. Kroppen var spændt og udfyldt. De gamle er døden, de unge er livet.’ (227)

Flowers and their scent are common, as if the moments recorded in the episodes were especially resonant because of smell. The roses Nelly takes to her sister-in-law Magda’s deathbed provoke a related memory, that of her own bridal bouquet; and her afternoon is punctuated with the scent of various flowers, jasmine and peonies in the fields she cycles through, carnations brought by mourners, poppies in her dream, sprinkled under the wheels of her own funeral cortege, and roses from Magda’s own garden (9-12). In 1960, the young girl who is about to be confirmed is unexpectedly given flowers on the morning of the ceremony, and buries her nose in them; but there are sensations of touch and vision, too:

‘Der er tre buketter pakket ind i silkepapir, som hun glatter omhyggeligt. Hun havde ikke ventet at få blomster og snuser og snuser. Blå iris og mimoser, liljer og freesier. Hendes søster står med ansigtet nede i buketterne på køkkenbordet. Farvene breder sig. Duften breder sig.’ (44)

The excitement of her rite of passage, the fear of consorting with boys, and the traumatic experience suffered some weeks previously, when she witnessed Martin Krog killing his dog, are absorbed into the expanding colours and scents of this

moment, which marks the end of the episode. In contrast, the forty-eight hot-house tulips in the doctor's waiting room in 1983 have no scent for Lucinda; they evoke in her only a sense of sadness at modern farming practices (192); these are not flowers grown in the local landscape.

Food is another sensual memory that features in most episodes, whether as the smell of lunch or the taste of dinner, or as raw stock to be prepared in a shop, for example. The little girl who loses her father to a brain haemorrhage has been in the garden all morning, and at lunchtime the scent of flowers becomes mixed with the smell of lunch cooking (66). Augusta's sick father vomits after a lunch of prawns and wine (264-5). After Martine Sørensen returns home the day she is raped, she smells the dinner her husband has prepared, and becomes ravenous, devouring the food like an animal:

‘Hun kan spise hele skinken, som Ebbe har lagt i så smukke skiver langs en bræmme af grønne ærter og bønner. [...] Hun kan ikke få mad hurtigt nok. Det løber ned ad blusen [...] Bærrene triller ud over bordet og ned på gulvet. Hun kryber under bordet og om bag stolene og propper hele håndfulde i munden, spytter sten ud og sluger sten.’ (270-1)

Where some trauma has occurred, then, what seems to be in evidence is not merely an awareness of the environment of the ‘strålende moment’, but a more intense reaction to it, whether by compulsive eating or compulsive sniffing of flowers. The constant ‘background noise’ in these episodes of smells, tastes, colours, weather, and so on, I would argue, not only sites the memory firmly in the bodily senses, but also sites it in a landscape replete with ‘banal’ symbols of the imagined community such as national traditions of horticulture and cuisine. What is grown, prepared and eaten, and how these tasks are performed, is part of social memory, and these incorporating practices



are repeated to cumulative effect throughout the novel. We sense the moving of many generations of bodies in the same environment. Indeed, a long-term perspective is provided on a few occasions, where the deep time of evolution is invoked, turning individual (specifically, the human brain) into species:

'I femogfyrre år har der været orden og ro af en anden verden ind i kraniets stilhed. Den bløde, muslingeformede substans har med samme sikkerhed udført store og små opgaver til gavn for manden. En konstant proces bestående af livets samlede erfaring. Sekund lagt på sekund i millioner af år.' (63)

'Men visse mennesker får hallucinationer, drømmesyn stærkere end al livagtighed [...] Hvad har de mange millioner år ikke oplagret og gemt i hjernevævet?' (242-3)

Here we have a sudden appeal to a defamiliarising micro-perspective, an inner biological world, the limits of cognition; the first extract is taken from a passage describing how a cerebral hæmorrhage spreads through the brain. Knudsen's notion of the 'strålende moment', where a relational *mellemfelt* is produced between text and reader in the face of something that is sensed, though not necessarily 'sanctioned' by the text, accounts for an uncanny turn in many of the episodes, where the bodily practices central to social memory are involved in some kind of disjunction (temporal or spatial). This tends to happen in the episodes where a discernable trauma occurs, or is known to have occurred.

#### **4.4.2. Trauma**

It is worth pondering on the concept of trauma for a moment, for it is one tenet of psychoanalysis that looms large in the memory wave in the humanities, as well as in the popular imagination. This is partly due to media reporting over the last decades of the phenomenon of analysands 'rediscovering' repressed memories of sexual abuse,

alien abduction, and so on. Middleton and Woods declare that ‘Repression is dubious science’ (2000:99). Furthermore, the wholesale transfer of received ideas about loss and rediscovery of memory due to trauma from the level of the individual mind to that of the collective (un)conscious of a society or nation will not wash; collective memories, argues Kansteiner (2002: 187), are made (and unmade) through very different processes and can best be described and studied as ‘multimedia collages’ (190). So when Knudsen describes trauma as central to the new realism, ‘fordi det udgør en kerne, der ikke kan repræsenteres’ (2002b:231), the difficulty in representation stems not so much from a lack of memory on the part of *det skrivende jeg*, but from the complex of texts and narratives that have gone to make and re-make the account of any given event. Where, asks Middleton and Woods, do the boundaries of individual memory, and therefore identity, lie? (2000:100). Identity can be construed as intertextual, and certainly bound up with social memory, as Halbwachs also insists.

For Knudsen, the traumatic memory is rooted in the body, and is therefore one site where the reader is affectively tied to the text by a contract of intimacy (2002b: 230, 238); it is a particular manifestation of a more general turn to the problem of representation. For our purposes, the implications of trauma and forgetting for the representation of time in the narrative are of most interest. There is a struggle on the part of the narrator to express how the subjective conception of the flow of a life is shaped by certain events. This explicit concern gives extra depth to the already complex weave of different temporalities in the novel.

The disjunction is sometimes described by the rememberer metaphorically. A mentally unstable woman who is obsessed with a dead film star divides the world up into before and after his death, an event which she regards as ‘det uigenkaldelige punkt, den grusomme knivsæg’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 237). A less dramatic watershed is ‘den uhyggelige meddelelse’ that leads a wife to take the decision never to speak again (and indeed she remains dumb until her dying day) (59). In shock after being sexually assaulted, Martine Sørensen tries to walk backwards in time to wipe out the incident:

‘For hvert skridt fjernede hun sig fra episoden mellem kaprifolierne og nærmede sig de steder og den tid, hvor det endnu ikke var sket. Hvor det ikke skulle ske, fordi hun bestemte, at det ikke skulle ske’ (269)

A more dubious, but seductive, extension of this idea of a pattern of underlying narrative ‘breakages’ comes with the episode of 18 March 1965. This is the only episode where the time section precedes the dated section. It is immediately obvious that this episode distinguishes itself from the rest of the novel with its almost grotesque, micro-perspective realism, that is, its oscillation between the interior of a man’s brain and his activities in the field as the cerebral hæmorrhage proceeds through the tissue, drowning more and more of his brain-cells, and, in the end, killing him:

‘Han svinger en tung sæk op på ryggen og ser ud over markerne.  
Fortykkelsen på blodåren er voldsom. Blodet synger.  
‘Karrets elasticitet er opbrugt og de udspændte vægge størknede i et tryk mod vævet.’ (64)

The episode then pans out to the dated section, and recounts, from the point of view of a child (Emilie), the day as experienced by the man’s family. Thus the episode entails

chronic spatial and temporal disjunction, but it also poses the problem of who is remembering in a more awkward way than the rest of the novel. As the poet Andrew Greig succinctly observes, ‘Your last hour won’t be remembered. That’s / the only difference between it and any other hour’ (2001: 61). In this case, we cannot possibly be dealing with a field memory, since the protagonist dies instantly and cannot pass on his experience; what is going on inside his skull can only be worked through and passed on to social memory by another person. In fact, Frandsen tells us that the man’s death is very close to a biographical account of the death of Grønfeldt’s own father, from a brain hæmorrhage, when she was five years old (2001: 214). Without attempting a psychoanalytic interpretation of this instance of art imitating life, it is interesting to draw on A.S. Byatt’s account of the smoothing out and dredging up of mnemonic patterns that constitutes part of the textuality of her novels. The re-working of the temporal disjunction occasioned by such a break in the child’s life narrative – before and after father’s death – and of the trope of the minute processes of the death of the body are what, in large part, ties *I dag* together.

## **5. Hypertelos: Death’s waiting room**

For this is a novel about death; there is a death, either reported or witnessed, in almost every episode, whether within the temporal bubble of the day in question, or in the context of an RI.

### **5.1. Death and bodily practices**

In *I dag*, death is a bodily event and the rituals surrounding death are incorporating practices. When Magda dies on 4 July 1952, her face is ‘glattet ud’ at the moment of death, and Nelly performs the rituals of closing her eyes and gathering flowers for the bier (12). Albert Svensen, on the other hand, dies in his chair, possibly while watching

the midnight porno-film, and is not found for two days; his home-help thinks the smell of his rotting corpse stayed with her all day (39). The stinking reality of death and decay is a way of life for nurse Margarita; but she smiles to hide her discomfort at the ‘stanken fra sygesengen’ of the dying amtsborgmester (107). Nevertheless, she performs the rituals expected of a nurse by society: there is a density, in this episode, of occurrences of her smiling, and stroking the hands and shoulders of the sick and of worried relatives. More gruesome is Martin Krog’s response to his wife’s death: he beheads her dog, Lulu, and a young neighbour is traumatised by the screaming and the noise of the dog’s head falling on the cement floor (40).

## **5.2. The community of the dead**

There is, then, an underlying network of signification in the text which establishes a community encompassing the living and the dead. The community of the living is reaffirmed by the performance of incorporating practices surrounding illness and death, and the dead are confirmed as members of the community by virtue of these rites. Anderson alludes to such an affective relationship with the dead when he writes of the ‘ancestral “Englishness”’ of the Anglican funeral rites (1991: 145), which, he says, conjures up ‘a ghostly intimation of simultaneity across homogenous, empty time’. Knudsen alludes to a special intensity between text and reader created at the boundary between a living and a dead body: ‘læst realistisk er denne levende-døde krop en notation for tekstens evne til at skabe nærvær og intensitet, en >>krop<< mellem tekst og læser’ (Knudsen 2002b:239).

Foucault, too, recognises a community of the dead in his lecture *Des espaces autres*, identifying the graveyard as a heterotopia, a space quite other to the cultural spaces of

the living, but nevertheless connected inextricably to all the other spaces of the society, for everyone has relatives in this “‘other city’”, where each family possessed its dark dwelling’ (1998:181). What is also strange about the graveyard is that it, in common with most heterotopias, opens out onto a heterochronia, a ‘temporal discontinuity’ (*découpages du temps*), engendered by the strange time of the end of life, and ‘that quasi eternity in which he perpetually dissolves and fades away’ (182).

Now, no graveyard is mentioned in *I dag*, but the final episode takes place in Verner’s place of work, the *plejehjem*. Foucault has a special category for old peoples’ homes, describing them as a hybrid of two heterotopias, a space of crisis relative to the rest of society, and a space of deviance, for ‘idleness forms a kind of deviation’ relative to the rest of our society (180). I would argue that the *plejehjem* in *I dag* also fulfils many of the same roles as a graveyard: it is the repository for people whose next stop is death, and contains a cross-section of the community with connections to many of the families and individuals whose stories are recounted in the novel; it is an archive of local knowledge and memories. As Verner muses, the dreams of the old and dying are stronger than those of the living: in the *plejehjem*, ‘de døde vinder over de levende. De døde er her for at blive’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 291).

Furthermore, the *plejehjem* (at least this one) opens out onto the odd multiple times of this text: it is a space, a heterotopia, in which the myriad moments of recollection – the myriad spacetimes – of various lives can jostle. Just as it sits not at the centre of a society but at its end, in the sense that people go there at the end of their lives, so too does the *plejehjem* sit at the end of the chronological line for this community, i.e. 1996. It is a place of dreams and visions expressed only in fragments and snippets by

the senile to their listeners, and each fragment spreads out in time and space, like the colours and scents of the Confirmation flowers.

Rather than forming a coherent narrative by connecting the scraps and patches of their lives, the remembrances of these residents are isolated capsules of spacetime. Between them lies the great unknown, un-narrated stretches of other people's existences, Kjærstad's *hvide mellemrum*. However, juxtaposed, they approach Halbwachs' ideal of the 'restlessness of memory', which can foster a social structure where memories are exchanged and modulated across cultural difference, destabilising narrative re-construction. Only at the level of the individual episode, the sense memories of residents are being worked through and formed into a narrative, and therefore an identity. As the TV-addict (or perhaps an overheard television presenter) muses while watching her nature programmes,

'Det interessante i verden er de mange anelser og den store uvidenhed. Mellem de to punkter sker det. Måske uden vi mærker det. Under ti procent af alle arter på jorden er kendt af mennesket. Det er det eneste interessante i verden.' (Grønfeldt 1998: 257)

### **Home again: The *plejehjem* as national spacetime**

The *plejehjem* is also a phenomenon of the welfare state, where the Danish state meets the nation-people. If Verner's cleaning round, every morning for the last thirty years (289), speaks to us of Høeg's Anna and her obsessive pursuit of microscopic specks of dirt, and her daughter Maria's realisation that 'det hj-hj-hjælper ikke, for der kommer altid mere skidt' (Høeg 1999: 7), it is also a function of the culturality of the welfare state itself: the dream of complete cleanliness, complete health, complete provision for the national community. Thus the historical welfare state, to a greater

extent than other nation-state systems, concerned itself with the well-being of the body. The state took on the gendered role of carer in exchange for the participation of traditional carers in the labour market. (Christiansen & Petersen 2001: 189). The social memory maintained by incorporating practices involved in care work was thus 'commodified' by the welfare state (ibid.), its practices and symbolics intersecting with those of the institutions of the nation-state.

As Lars Trägårdh (1997:283) argues, the Nordic welfare state is as much cultural as social: 'from the outset [it] was an order that more perfectly than others fulfilled the ideal of the symmetrical alignment of cultural nation, civic state, and political economy'. In Denmark, where the limits of state, territory, nation, language and *ethnie* coincide almost perfectly, the territoriality of the welfare state is part and parcel of its culturality; all the more so because a direct line of descent from Lutheranism, through Grundtvigianism, to Danish Social Democracy is not only a fantasy of pedagogic myth-history (McCrone 1998: 51) but is also seriously analysed by historians of a postnational bent (Østergård 1998: 336-68). The welfare state was a teleological project. It can therefore be argued that the projected history of the Danish nation has been, in the twentieth century, to a considerable extent tied up with the utopian future of the welfare state. Now the nation looks *backward* to a Golden Age of welfare, the 1950s and 60s. The spatio-temporal functioning of the welfare state as an inclusive 'imagined community' is best summed up by the Swedish Social Democratic vision, where state and hearthfire coalesce in the iconic *folkhem*: the people's home.



This national community of the living and the dead, who weave a disjunctive narrative of belonging out of their memories, hi/stories and practices, bring us full circle to a place where time seems to stand still, back to Mørkhøj, where, as in the *plejehjem*, the dead circulate among the living, and different spacetimes compete and coalesce for mastery of the national narrative. We now move onwards, or backwards, to bring all three novels together and ask, with Craig (1996: 225) – where are we in history?

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion: Recycling the Century

‘It is not just material substances, including nuclear ones, which pose a waste problem, but also the defunct ideologies, bygone utopias, dead concepts and fossilized ideas which continue to pollute our mental space. Historical and intellectual refuse pose an even more serious problem than industrial waste. Who will rid us of the sedimentation of centuries of stupidity?’ (Baudrillard 1994b: 26)

We have established that the three novels in this study cannot unproblematically be categorised as ‘realist historical fiction’, the genre to which most critical recognition of history in literature has been confined (Middleton & Woods 2000: 3), and which shaped the classic novel upon which Anderson’s own narrative of the nativity of the national imagination rests. This deviation from Anderson’s account of the formal literary features that foster a national consciousness is hardly shocking, since the ‘bourgeois’ historical novel, just like the particular conception of the collective past and future that it narrates, has ‘fallen into disrepute and infrequency’ (Jameson 1991: 283). Nevertheless, the problems of history and of community, their texture and their geometries, loom large in these Danish novels. While each of the three texts suggests a different national spacetime, the parameters of their historical investigation can be identified as contiguous with those of the twentieth century.

To nominate this concluding chapter a closing chapter would be not only to offend the sensibilities of postmodernism(s) by imposing some kind of totalising movement on a study of the literary representations of an era whose only established characteristic is a resistance to totalisation (Harvey 1990: 42); it would also be to offend the most famous Danish literary heroine of the 1990s, Høeg’s Smilla, who, at the fading of *Frøken smillas fornemmelse for sne* (1992) back into the blank page (Norseng 1997: 54), disappoints with a blunt: ‘Det kommer ikke til nogen afgørelse’ (Høeg 1992:

435). The intention in this concluding chapter is to gather up threads, and trace the intersecting tropes that trace through our three novels the imagining of the nation in space and time. Central to this process is the work of a philosopher of the end, Jean Baudrillard, whose resolutely metaphorical account of the late twentieth-century imagination can help us to think through, again, the manifestation of certain recurring themes and images in literature. History, time and space are not where or what they used to be, he argues – and that changes everything. Implicated in each of the following tropes is a tendency to dissolve time into space and to spatialise history. Also implicated is the dialectic of order and chaos that has been so characteristic of our novels' attempts to map out the recent history of Denmark.

1. The anxiety of memory (*what* is remembered, and *who* remembers)
2. The sense of the *øjeblik*, a concept which encompasses multiplicity (points of *view*, stories, voices, identities) and spatio-temporal fracture (the multifaceted moment, reflecting and refracting space and time) and the links between them that constitute an imagined community
3. The concern with biology (the body, the brain, the soil)
4. Endism, *telos*, and the hypertelic moment

### **1. The anxiety of memory**

The contemporary novel, as Middleton & Woods (2000: 1) suggest, is concerned not only to negotiate beliefs about the nature of the past, but also beliefs about the possibility of those very beliefs. In other words, the contemporary historical imagination questions the conditions of knowledge of the past as well as its character and content. David Harvey's early and influential intervention in the discussion of

what the condition of postmodernity might look like identifies two features of the era which help to account for the anxiety of memory. The first is time-space compression, whose effect is popular access to a storm of images and commodities (and images *as* commodities) from across the globe (Harvey 1990: 293 and *passim*). The second, ephemerality of cultural products, values and ideas, is a consequence of the first, leading to fragmentation of values and identities, and excessive simplification of ideas (286). The image as commodity can be described as a ‘simulacrum’: ‘a state of such near perfect replication that the difference between the original and the copy becomes almost impossible to spot’ (289). Indeed, a simulacrum may have no original at all. The prevailing discourse of the postmodernist aesthetic and the postmodern condition has therefore tended to imply ever-increasing fragmentation of images and ideas, and an absence of any convincing grand narrative to bring order to the chaos, a *Zeitgeist* that is both exciting and discomfiting. As we have established, though, an uncritical assumption of this condition in life or in literature can too easily slip back into its own grand narrative.

For Harvey, the ‘collage of imploding spatialities’ (304) engendered by time-space compression, unimpeded movement of people, goods, services, capital and images over increasingly vast areas of the globe, results in an intensified pull from local place, ‘a search for secure moorings in a drifting world’ (302), in order to construct personal or collective identity, or to lure capital (303). But, echoed by Augé (1997) and his ‘non-places’, Harvey sees postmodern place – whether local, regional or national – as itself a collection of images balanced precariously on some ‘motivational power of tradition’ (303):

‘The irony is that tradition is now often preserved by being commodified and marketed as such. The search for roots ends up at worst being produced and marketed as an image, as a simulacrum or pastiche (imitation communities constructed to evoke images of some folksy past, the fabric of traditional working-class communities being taken over by an urban gentry)’ (303)

Harvey is not guilty of presenting the postmodern condition as something entirely new – he identifies successive ‘disconcerting and disruptive bouts of time-space compression’ at least since the Renaissance (327). However, the above passage must be put in perspective by drawing a parallel between its allegation of the construction of inauthentic, twentieth-century versions of traditional communities and the constructivist model of nineteenth-century nation-building that highlights the bourgeois hijacking of ‘authentic’ folk traditions (cf Mørch 1996). The anxiety of origins extends wholly to contemporary interpretations of past generations’ actions in the name of national community, whence the danger of declaring nations to be imaginary, rather than imagined. A related danger is the assumption that the simulacrum, the manufactured, depthless image, does not have its own seductive force, and thereby its own worth as a cultural product and expression of nationness.

In any case, this is the world in which authentic memory of personal, local and international events is rendered suspect, seeming to dissipate into a succession of image commodities. Baudrillard expands on the idea of the simulacrum to explain contemporary socio-cultural responses to history. Echoing Renan’s strange syntax of ‘remembering to forget’ as the crucial dynamic of constructing a national community, Baudrillard shows how the question of the authenticity of the origins of memories is at stake:

‘There are two forms of forgetting: on the one hand, the slow or violent extermination of memory, on the other, the spectacular promotion of a phenomenon, shifting it from historical space into the sphere of advertising, the media becoming the site of a temporal strategy of prestige [...] This is how we have manufactured for ourselves, with great swathes of promotional images, a synthetic memory which serves as our primal reference, our founding myth.’ (Baudrillard 1994b: 23)

The mnemotechnics of history thus cease to be incorporating practices, storytelling, and so on, and become promotional sites, or media events. Benedict Anderson’s recent turn to bound and unbound seriality (1998) as constitutive of the national imagination, though it is concerned with the media of the late colonial period, also approaches this privileging of the profusion of images rather than the events themselves. The logic of seriality segues properly into that of the simulacrum, however, when Anderson writes of the function of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. The difficulty experienced by most visitors in formulating an appropriate response to the memorial is attributed to their understanding that ‘the statue and its setting are replicas, and peculiar replicas at that, because there is no original’ (Anderson 1998: 48). The response of most visitors, it turns out, is to take photographs and purchase souvenir t-shirts and postcards.

The commodification of the remembrance of the twentieth century was apparent in many phenomena of cultural retrospection that reiterated a democratised national(ist) pedagogy. As early as 1992, Baudrillard saw that the year 2000 would initiate a kind of nostalgia or mourning fuelled by the proliferation of image commodities, a chewing over or re-run of history, so contaminated are we by the ‘technology of retrospection’ (1994: 11). In Denmark, *Politiken* ran national surveys to identify and list the ‘best’ books and films of the century, and its *Danmarksudstilling* (at [www.politiken.dk](http://www.politiken.dk)) is also organised in the style of a ‘top ten’: a representative

selection of political and cultural celebrities comment on their most treasured icons of Danishness. In evidence here is a slide from a chronological retrospective to an archiving and listing of disparate and discrete artefacts as emblematic of a national culture. That the ‘*nydansk*’ parliamentarian Naser Khader’s choices stand alongside those of the leader of the far-right Dansk Folkeparti, Pia Kærsgård, ensures that the euro currency takes up its place in the list of homely Danish artefacts alongside *rugbrød*, but renders the exercise no less complicit in the commodification of images as symbols of nationness. David Harvey’s comment that the response to a ‘bombardment of stimuli’ in the postmodern world is a tendency to revert to ‘images of a lost past’ and to excessive ‘simplification’ of identity discourses (1990: 286) is well illustrated by these snack-sized millennial retrospectives.<sup>21</sup>

Jameson predicted the change all this has wrought in the geometry of the national imagination:

‘The new spatial logic of the simulacrum can now be expected to have a momentous effect on what used to be historical time. The past is thereby itself modified: what was once, in the historical novel as Lukács defines it, the organic genealogy of the bourgeois collective project – what is still, for the redemptive historiography of an E. P. Thompson or of American “oral history,” for the resurrection of the dead of anonymous and silenced generations, *the retrospective dimension indispensable to any vital reorientation of our collective future* – has meanwhile itself become a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum.’ (1991: 18, my emphasis)

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<sup>21</sup> Outside Denmark, the Tate Modern’s *Century City* exhibition of Spring 2001, which was advertised with the tag-line ‘Last Century Was Amazing: Don’t Miss It’, presented photography, painting and sculpture from various cities during defined periods of the twentieth century, including WWI Vienna, and 1990s London, times and places which were witness to some extraordinary outbursts of artistic creativity and social ferment. The century cannot be imagined except on a stage of space, or, rather, place; Benjamin’s well-known aphorism that Paris was the capital of the nineteenth century (Benjamin 1999: 25) was echoed in this exhibition, which centred the spirit of a time in a place, and distributed the spirit of a century across the world’s greatest cities. This Tate exhibition represented one of the first post-millennium attempts to re-present, re-write, re-categorise, and re-cycle the twentieth century.

The 'retrospective dimension' of the national imagination is said to have all historical depth squeezed out of it, and arranges itself as an image bank that can be reproduced and used at will. For Baudrillard, too, such a posthistorical condition can be described as 'a hypertelic memory which stores all data in a constant state of instant retrievability, excluding any work of mourning, any resolution of the past' (1994b: 73). Collective and individual memory, then, loses its status as 'the superhighway to the past' (Middleton & Woods 2000: 5) and retreats into a collage of images whose connection to any accessible past is doubtful.

If the national imagination is no longer sure of its own authenticity or able to project a convincingly meaningful linear order onto memories of the past and hopes for the future, what does this mean for the 'national' role and behaviour of narrative? One expectation would be that texts themselves (re)produce – and, indeed, themselves *constitute* – simulacral memory and its storage. While the representation of a historical event in written text does not have the kind of visual immediacy – the simulation effect – that televisual mediation of an event has, the written text nonetheless can behave in an analogous way by simulating documentary evidence such as historiography or memory. Baudrillard writes of the acceleration of stories, messages and events in the same breath as media images. In fact:

*'every kind of language has to be resolved into a binary formulation so that it can circulate not, any longer, in our memories, but in the luminous, electronic memories of our computers'* (1994b: 2, my emphasis)

The novel is a technic of memory at a simple level: Connerton's description of the impact of the advent of inscribing practices offends poststructuralists everywhere with its claim that writing renders meaning 'unalterably fixed' and 'definitively closed'



(1989: 75). Middleton & Woods immediately de-bunk Connerton in this respect, and extend the contribution of textual memory to the contemporary mnemonic imagination by pointing to reading as a practice of memory: ‘texts are forms of prosthetic social memory by which readers increase and correct their own limited cognitive strengths and participate in a public memorial space’(2000: 5). In this sense, the reader is engaged in a dialogue with the text; reading is a performance dependent on knowledge and affect that critically interprets and re-interprets national history. The contract that White reads into the historical novel and its projected readership, which assumed the capacity to distinguish between real and imaginary events (1999: 67), therefore still obtains, with the caveat that the suspicion that all events are simulacra has, in White’s term, ‘etiolated’ the distinction between fact and fiction. The mediation of the events of the last decades through the broadcast media often brings with it a proliferation of detail about the event as well as a myriad of versions of it (White 1999: 72). It tells us everything, and therefore nothing for certain. The chasm between the memory of an observed event, and the memory of a mediated event casts doubt on the veracity of any version of an event: there can be no ‘udtømmende og enkelt’ history.

This radical doubt is negotiated exceptionally well by the three texts in this study, by way of the refraction of ‘factual’ events through documents and through the memory of characters. The wholeness of memories and the sites of their enunciation are frequently deferred and rendered contingent. Their allusions to the Second World War, for example, are multiple and diffuse, tapping into current debate on the construction of the collective memory of the Occupation years (Bryld 2001). To this iconic and contested ‘public memorial space’, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*

contributes only a lacuna, although the narrator declares himself frustrated by Carsten's failure to notice much of this period:

'Det eneste fra besættelsens sidste år som blev siddende i Carstens erindring, var studiets paragraflandskaber. [...] Han stod op om morgenen og mødte på arbejde i Statistisk Departement og kørte, uden at se noget som helst, sin budcykel forbi bålene i Istedgade og igennem slagsmålene mellem situationsbisserne og de private vagtværn og forbi nyheden om invasionen' (Høeg 1999: 294)

Carsten's consciousness of the time is not only fragmented and incomplete, it also lacks a sense of chronology; his ride to work is also a ride through different periods of the war. When the whoops of jubilation are heard outside the lecture room on May 4, 1945, Carsten and his professor continue to work, and the scenes fixed in the Danish popular imagination – the shots, the commandeering of a tram dragged along Store Kannikestræde – are only glimpsed outside the window. Carsten's only connection to the situation is that his future wife is sitting on the roof of the tram. Such an incomplete and somewhat askew version of an epochal event fixed in the national pedagogy opens up a space for the reader's memory of that day (whether first- or second-hand) to be relativised; the homogeneity of the response to the Liberation is challenged, and the moment drawn out of national homogeneous empty time and into the spatio-temporal network of a fictional national subject's hi/story.

*Byen og verden* contains numerous episodes set during the Second World War, most of which describe the Occupation from the margins, ethnic, religious or political. Overretssagfører Lorens Hans Levy, for example, saves both his official and his unofficial sets of wife and children from deportation, but loses his own life, and his hybrid religious beliefs problematise the easy polarisation of Nazi and Jew: 'han var

en af dem der døde under hjemtransporterne, kaldet af Odins ravne til det Valhalla der for ham stadig var den sande Eden, og i fuld foragt for det folk der havde trådt ideen i sølet' (Hultberg 1998: 89). The experience of Denmark's Jews during the Occupation is also touched on in *I dag*, which otherwise starts too late to have much to say about the Occupation. One of Elva's lovers is 'en mørkøjet jøde, som var gået under jorden og arbejdede for kost og logi på en gård i nærheden'. They dream of fleeing to the USA, but '[f]å dage senere var han væk. Han kom ikke som aftalt' (Grønfeldt 1998: 15). The reason for his disappearance remains unexplained; theirs is a random encounter made possible by the shifting encounters of the war years. Another marginal soul in Viborg, Irma Jensen, born in Vienna, is regarded with suspicion by the townspeople and suffers during the Occupation: 'børnene rakte ustraffet og delvis opfordret tunge ad Irma bag hendes ryg' (160); that her funeral is scheduled for May 5, but is of course postponed, echoes Claus Bryld's point about the ambivalent and multiple meanings attached to iconic dates by different individuals:

'Det er den store historie, der størkner og bliver ritualiseret. Det er den vi hænger alting op på, ikke bare årstal som 1940, 43 og 45, men også værdier og identitet [...] Men for enkeltskæbnerne er virkeligheden jo ikke sådan. Selv for mange af dem, der sejrede i 1945, blev sejren ikke til glade, men til sorg eller skuffelse.' (Bryld 2001: 61)

These stories and memories fill in only tiny fragments of the jigsaw-puzzle of experience that is Occupied Denmark. And that is precisely the point; these novels shift the balance from the pedagogy of collective remembrance (which is scientifically discredited in any case) and towards the interaction of small and grand hi/stories. Or, in Bryld's words, to 'et mere broget, dekoloniseret, økologisk og indfølelse regi. Det vil også sige et regi, der rummer mulighed for at forbinde den store, offentlige, og den lille, private historie.' (2001: 193). Similarly, Halbwachs, for

whom the Liberation of Europe came too late, insists that remembering well is remembering democratically, or even dialogically, in the context of one or multiple groupings (1992: 52). The act of reading enables the reader to ‘increase and correct their own limited cognitive strengths’ (Middleton & Woods 2000: 5), and participate in a space of negotiation of group identity. The next section explores the textual connections between hi/stories that, implicating the reader in the complex of textual memory, become conduits for postnational national imagining.

## **2. Convulsive connections: the imagined spacetime of the community**

‘Disruptive spatiality triumphs over the coherence of perspective and narrative in postmodern fiction, in exactly the same way that imported beers coexist with local brews, local employment collapses under the weight of foreign competition, and all the divergent spaces of the world are assembled nightly as a collage of images upon the television screen’ (Harvey 1990: 302)

The logic of national history as a synchronic spatial field of simulacra, Harvey suggests above, explains the proliferation of images and the segueing of factual and fictional events, and of micro- and macro-histories, into each other. However, it over-emphasises fragmentation at the expense of community, and storage at the expense of dynamic exchange. The synchronic and diachronic dimensions of the imagined community may have changed in postmodernity, but the community itself has not disappeared; it is the connections that hold its hi/stories together that are imagined differently.

The proliferation of social groupings based on the politics of recognition and identity cut across the nation as a family traditionally conceived. Twentieth-century socialism

seems to have failed to replace the pull of national loyalties with imagined communities of class; the persistent seductiveness of the national idea is no better illustrated than in the ethnic conflicts and secessions of post-1989 Eastern Europe. ‘What is stupendous,’ muses Baudrillard in this context, ‘is that nothing one thought superseded by history has really disappeared. All the archaic, anachronistic forms are there ready to re-emerge, intact and timeless, like viruses deep in the body.’ (1994b: 27). However, viruses survive by mutation, and contemporary national identity, as we have seen, co-exists with other identities as a hybrid discourse. It may be, as Jameson suggests, that ‘the fission we associate with the “new social movements,” micropolitics and microgroups, [has] now fastened onto national traditions’ which themselves become ‘a badge of local in-group membership’ (1991: 131), that is, a part of the *à la carte* construction of individual identity rather than its primary constituent. This worries Bryld, whose ‘skræmmebillede’ is that historical discourses will become pure life-style choices, and reminds us that ‘ubegrænset frihed til identetsvariationer, det vil sige til at påbegynde ny historiefortælling, [er] kun til at bære på baggrund af en godt nok opdelt, men trods alt *fælles* historie’ (2001: 192, emphasis in original).

### **2.1. The spacetime of the *øjeblik***

A more nuanced perspective sees the spacetime of the nation jostling with cultural differences concentric with it but nevertheless disjunctive; in Bhabha’s words, ‘cultural knowledges that are adjacent and adjunct but not necessarily accumulative, teleological or dialectical’ (1994: 163). The temporal disjunction that Bhabha argues will save the contemporary nation from subsuming cultural difference into a spatio-temporal whole is based in the non-synchronicity of jarring systems of signification (162-3). Crucially, the trope of the *øjeblik* in the three Danish novels in this study is

suggestive both of a debilitation of linear time (homogeneous, empty time) and of a refraction of the consciousness of the ‘national’ narrating subject. In other words, the *øjeblik* spatialises time, because it is a moment extracted from the continuum of history whose relationship to other moments becomes predicated, in the text, not on chronology but causality, thematic prefiguration, or simple proximity. And the ‘eye’/ ‘*øje*’ in the *øjeblik* is also a spatial phenomenon, for it looks out from a narrating consciousness, swooping in on a particular moment in history, experienced at the micro-level of the individual. It is therefore the non-synchronicity of subjectively experienced spacetime that the textual *øjeblik* expresses; the disjunctive narrative trajectories of lives told in text can seep into the readerly imagination, prompting us to think the multifarious narratives that constitute the contemporary nation, that are, to re-quote Bhabha, ‘adjacent and adjunct but not necessarily accumulative, teleological or dialectical’. This is quite different from the spatio-temporal arrangement of Benedict Anderson’s ‘meanwhile’ that formed the basis of the narrative of the modern nation.

That the *øjeblik* encompasses the questions of point-of-view and time can perhaps be seen more clearly if we return to Søren Mørch’s appeal to Chaos Theory (*sommerfugle-effekten* in Danish) as a (dis)organising principle that can account for what every historian already knows:

‘hvad der sker med enkeltpersoner, kan få de mest overraskende og uoverskuelige effekter. I takt med elimineringen af troen på, at verden kan opdeles i styrende og styrede og med, at målene derfor skrider og bliver til luftspejlinger, falder sommerfugle-effekten tydeligere og tydeligere i øjnene.’ (Mørch 1996: 521)

Chaos Theory privileges the role of the little hi/stories, the almost imperceptible actions whose effects are unpredictable. Everyday experience is rendered significant, and ostensibly powerless individuals gain influence over History. While the causes and effects of a situation analysed by Chaos Theorists may be diffuse and range over unpredictable stretches of time and space, the theory still assumes some kind of temporal environment, though chronology may be impossible to establish. Baudrillard manages to illustrate this aspect of the theory by reversing its logic, asking whether ‘the inverse exponentiality of effects in relation to causes’ have been studied, that is ‘the potential hurricanes which end in the beating of a butterfly’s wings’ (1994b: 114). Such a reversible Chaos Theory would be revelatory, he argues, for we would have to ‘accord a privileged status to these backfires, these malign deviations, these lightweight catastrophes which cripple an empire much more effectively than any great upheavals’ (121). In so doing, we would see the baleful simulation of progressive history tip back into non-linearity. ‘Anastrophe versus catastrophe’ is the order of the history of our time.

The *små historier*, privileged in our three Danish novels, are, then, also integral to the chaos of history and have an untraceable influence on what are now dismissed as grand narratives. These influences are so multiple and tiny that they too, ironically, must be re-constructed as narratives in order to be minimally intelligible. But the reverse is also true; the ‘hurricanes’ of history cause butterflies’ wings to flutter, and an interest in this other end of the scale of existence is to appreciate the vast vistas, the ranging plenitude, of historical events. In entwining the *stille eksistenser* of the Danish twentieth century with the epochal events, in bringing into *chiaroscuro* the unknowable concerns of the lived everyday against the upheavals of history registered

in schoolbooks, the individual remembrance against the collective, these Danish novels arrest the ‘unfolding’ and ‘evolution’ of linear history, and send the logic of a homogenising national narrative spinning out into the wider space of a heterogeneous social field. As Kjærstad (1994) convincingly argues, the idea of ‘field’ is the key to *Byen og verden*, at least, for the hi/stories contained therein are not discrete in space and time, but interlinked as a kind of palimpsest of causality.

With heterodoxy and fragmentation as the prevailing postmodern orthodoxy, it was expected that the linear trajectory of Anderson’s classic national novel would be jettisoned, or at least problematised, in favour of new figurations redolent of spatial proliferation of databanks, networks, etc. Jameson, indeed, sees such patterns emerging in ‘the most energetic postmodernist texts’ which evoke de-centred communicational and economic spaces, the ‘postmodern sublime’ (1991: 37-8). In formal terms, *Byen og verden*, with its non-chronological arrangement of fragmented and unevenly-populated texts and its field-based principle of coherence, is the most obvious candidate for interpretation as a map of the database of individual and collective memories. But the arrangement of *I dag*, too, is suggestive of a carefully-catalogued storage system in which the chronological ordering of files does not preclude spatio-temporal cross-references (the retrospective interjections) being made according to the logic of hypertext. And *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* also allows for an undermining of its linear historiography by the stereographic, fractal, spatialised moment that prefigures and fulfils others. Indeed, Mads is particularly concerned with the connections between events:

‘[H]istorien er altid en opfindelse, den er et eventyr bygget over nogle spor [...] Disse spor ligger nogenlunde fast, de fleste af dem kan ligefrem lægges på bordet så enhver kan røre ved dem, men de er desværre ikke



historien, historien består af forbindelsen imellem dem, og det er den der giver problemer.’ (Høeg 1999: 144-5)

But the figuration of the database is unsatisfyingly ‘digital’ for these novels; it does not do justice to the *sinuousness* of the connections that render the community imagined there. This is why Echevarría’s (1998) extrapolation of the archival novel from Foucault’s archive is so powerful, for it conceives of a culling and loosing of things, symbols and narratives, without tipping over into chaos because inherent in it still is the longing for its own metastory. Baudrillard, too, re-tips the scales towards the sublime chaos of existence when he draws an analogy between the purity of language when the unconventional order of an anagram strips it of meaning, and the purity of time when the order imposed on it is no longer that of the Enlightenment project, but a kind of ‘convulsion’:

‘And the anagram, that detailed process of unravelling, that sort of poetic and non-linear convulsion of language - is there a chance that history lends itself to such a poetic convulsion, to such a subtle form of return and anaphora which, like the anagram, would - beyond meaning - allow the pure materiality of language to show through and - beyond historical meaning - allow the pure materiality of time to show through? [...] ‘Such would be the enchanted alternative to the linearity of history, the poetic alternative to the disenchanting confusion, the chaotic profusion of present events.’ (1994b: 122).

The telling of a hi/story, especially that of a national community, is unthinkable without some balance of order and chaos: it must enchant its readers or citizens. Both story and nation must have parameters discernible in all the confusion of the postmodern media flux. This possibility of a semblance of heterodox order is what the trope of the *øjeblik* fosters in these novels.

*Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* finds its narrative trajectory in two precisely simultaneous events in Spring 1929 (Høeg 1999: 7) that contain a concentrate of the century (8). Both moments open out into temporal geometries, the first with a machine gun barrel pointing towards the future, and the second with a microscope looking down into an endlessly-proliferating cycle of germs. These events are transitory ('i næste øjeblik er disse situationer borte') and therefore implicated in a chronology, and yet they are also eternal, caught up in a symbolic network of repeating patterns that constitute the cultural fabric of a century (7-8). The accumulative temporality of successive *øjeblikke* is arrested by the metaphoricity of this Danish word; the moment, the event is *seen*, and therefore *remembered* – but by whom? For Mads, the totalising rationality of historiographical practice is to be resisted; grasping an event means opening up the space between subjective experience and the demands of representational convention. Often, this results in a jolting narrative lacuna, an effect that is exemplified by his concession to the anorexic Amalie's conception of time, an account which, it is conceded here, would be construed by the *sensus communis* as not only deviant but also pathological:

'Da hun gik ud fra trykkeriet og den smalle korridor trådte hun direkte ind i sin sidste skoledag, hvad der ikke er praktisk muligt fordi hendes skole lå et stykke fra hendes hjem, men selv om det sandsynligvis er en hallucination som skyldtes hendes sult, så må vi respektere den alligevel fordi det er Amalies bevidsthed vi følger og ikke Kraks kort over København, og altså trådte Amalie fra sin fars trykkeri direkte ind i skolens foredragssal.' (Høeg 1999: 177)

The pedagogical voice of the national historian thus renounces its own claim to absolute knowledge of the linear workings of time – as well as Kraks' claim to absolute knowledge of the immutable character of mapped space – and relates,

instead, a hallucinating teenager's experience of the spatio-temporal dynamic of a given *mo(ve)ment* in the narrative.

The de-centering of narrating subject through a gossipy heteroglossia is the most distinctive feature of *Byen og verden*. The mutually-undermining certainties of *bysladder* render events in Hultberg's text impossible to classify as veritable and the non-linear accumulation of hi/stories renders these same narratives impossible to classify as completed. When a detailed description of how butcher Torsten Mikkelsen came to sever nerves in his left wrist is preceded with '[g]anske vist var fru overingeniør Brunhiolf Sigurdsson ikke personligt til stede [...] men man behøvede ikke at fortælle hende noget, hun kunne levende forestille sig' (Hultberg 1998: 230), the site of enunciation of this scenario is de-centred: the telling of it is disseminated across the distance between the event and fru Sigurdsson's re-imagining of it. One event that is interpreted in quite different ways by the different protagonists is, appropriately, remembered in a self-consciously Proustian way by Jørgen Andersen:

'[...] og de minder han havde, og som han senere, under sine sene studier, måtte sammenligne med Proust's madeleine, aldrig skulle han vide, så længe han levede, at de styrkende stykker ost på groveste grovbrød som sattes for familien foran thebordet klokken halv fem, var alt for robust for deres egne maver, selv husassistentens [...] nej de serveredes udelukkende for hans skyld' (Hultberg 1998: 86)

Jørgen eventually is introduced to Proust by frøken Hjorth in episode XCI (258). And so the temporal aspect of the *øjeblik* is also important in *Byen og verden*. The incommensurability of the time-scales of the stories in *Byen og verden* – some stretching over a lifetime, others concentrating on a particular temporally-located episode – renders the duration of any given moment-in-time contingent and suspect, for incidents glossed over or omitted from an ostensibly comprehensive life-story can

later (or earlier) be zoomed in on and filled out. Often, an *øjeblik* is the still centre of a hi/story, in the same way as artefacts of memory provide a site for hi/stories to flow through. The moment when nine-year-old Niels Asmus Larsen wades into Nørresø, for example, expands outwards in space with his own line of vision to take in this vista:

‘han standsede, kiggede ud over vandet og byen og Domkirken og Arresthuset og Katedralskolen og det nye grimme vandtårn og kunne lige skimte gavlen på deres hus, og solen fra himmelen og dens røde genskær i de svage småbølger, der skar ham i øjnene, skræppebladene duftede, han var helt alene, med søen, for han havde altid elsket søen, Du har altid elsket søen, men mest af alt elskede han sin mormor’ (253)

Niels’ grandmother has died, and so the same moment just before stepping into Nørresøen expands backwards in time to encompass the moment of his articulation of her death, as well as forwards to anonymous retrospective comments on his act of foolhardiness, which, in turn, point backwards in the text and forwards in time to the revelation of his sexuality: ‘drengen havde naturligvis ikke den fjerneste anelse om hvad det var han gjorde [...] på sin vis var det nu godt at han til trods for sin sarthed altså alligevel vidste at han var en rigtig dreng.’ (253) Such moments render *Byen og verden*’s play with history more than a renunciation of linear chronology: they are the textual nodes where an individual’s subjective experience of the town’s (and the world’s) spacetime sound through the carousel of shifting voices, and, thus, where history becomes truly spatialised.

*I dag* pulls its chosen moments rather more violently out of the temporal continuum, by pinning down its *øjeblikke* to identified chronological instances, in accordance with its structure of clock-time within calendar-time. However, the exact notations of

the clock are scorned by the tendency of the episodes to range far and wide within their own stretch of spacetime, as well as by the retrospective interjections which refract through this same spatio-temporal unity details of future events whose causal or thematic relationship to the episode underway is sometimes obvious, and sometimes obscure. As Edna follows Margareta through a gale, for example, their common will and trajectory at that moment is connected to the time of the interjection only by its contrast to their later deviation from the same life-path:

‘Hun løb efter Margareta. De havde samme vilje.  
*‘Senere blev deres liv på flere punkter forskelligt. Margareta Holm kvalte sit eneste barn, da det var fjorten dage gammelt [...] Edna Friis blev, før hun var femogtyve år, mor til fem sunde, larmende børn’* (Grønfeldt 1998: 176)

The present movement through space at a given moment serves as the catalyst for the intrusion of a fragment from another part of the girls’ common hi/story; community, this seems to suggest, is as much about the divergence of paths as about their convergence. The retrospective interjections into the parameters of the identified *øjeblik* thus have a disjunctive dynamic as far as both abstract space and time – the spacetime of a life – are concerned. While some interjections concern life-hi/stories that move tentacularly outwards into the world outside Denmark, whether by travel or the international exchange of video-messages by pensioners, others are concerned with the changes occurring over time in the same parcel of space in which the *øjeblik* is rooted. The fish-merchant’s evening walk is punctuated by a comment that insists on the persistence of space: ‘[h]un standsede lige på det sted, hvor den unge mand tre år senere slog sig ihjel på motorcyklen’ (248). Space becomes a palimpsest over time; the sale of her parents’ land distresses a girl who is about to be confirmed, and the interjection traces the results of the sale on the landscape and the community:

‘Hun forstod ikke og troede ikke på, at de mænd skulle overtage markerne. Nogen måtte hjælpe. Hun drømte, at det var en ond drøm. *‘Mændene, som på forhånd havde orienteret sig om fredningsplanerne, overtog jorden den første maj samme år. Samtidig opnåede de tilladelse til at opføre to beboelseshuse på arealet. Det undrede naboerne, som ikke længere måtte bygge redskabsskure og markhuse på det åbne land. De tilgav ikke pigens forældre, at de havde solgt til mændene.’* (42)

In this way, the status of *øjeblikke* is established less as slices of meanwhile in homogeneous, empty time in which members of the community are simultaneously going about their business, and more as multifaceted, fractal doors to a proliferation of linked events that, networked together, constitute the spacetime of a community.

## **2.2. Narrating the øjeblik: resisting a centred narrator**

A narrating voice that can order and link these concentric fields of experience sits somewhere between, on the one hand, Anderson’s omniscient narrator of the national ‘meanwhile’, and, on the other, a historian who can link up only the facts related to him by witnesses. We have established how the question of field and observer memories can help to conceptualise the double-and-split narrator of *I dag*, who is most usefully thought of as ranging across Jameson’s triad of subjectivities: ‘the old, closed, centred subject of inner-directed individualism’ and ‘the new non-subject of the fragmented or schizophrenic self’ have been joined by a third possibility, a ‘non-centred subject that is part of an organic group or collective’ (1991: 345). The gap between the heterophonic collective memory of gossip and the individual’s memory of lived experience is thereby opened up by the possibility of some kind of conduit suggestive of a group consciousness, rendering the cliché of a postmodern fragmented self less random.

The narrator of *I dag*, in the guise of Verner, can therefore access and order a storehouse of hi/stories pertaining to the group, which can be ‘catalogued’ but tend to spring out of this order and establish links that are more thematic or genealogical (organic) than chronological (digital). Much the same function can be traced through *Byen og verden*, in which the carnival of gossip regularly makes way for a quieter, more stable ‘eye’ on the world, that slows down the hi/story to a centred point in spacetime, the still centre of a life. The ‘non-centred subject that is part of an organic group or collective’ tells the hi/story of that collective from the micro- and macro-perspectives, and the conceit of the *øjeblik* enables it to do justice to disparate and fragmented trajectories in space and time which, nonetheless, coalesce as a network. This is why the narration of *Byen og verden* and *I dag* must resist both a centred point-of-view and omniscience. And Mads, too, in *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* is all too aware that even the most round-handed and open-minded historian does not have a consciousness capacious enough to encompass all the voices jostling for attention at a given moment:

‘Tilstede ved tvillingernes vugge er altså de fattiges og de riges og middelstandens og de allernederstes forventninger, og der er forventninger der peger bagud, og forventninger der peger fremad, og de blander sig allesammen i et sådant råbende kor af modsigelsesfulde forhåbninger at jeg dårligt kan få ro til at sige, at på dette tidspunkt har så mange drømme fået ørenlyd i Danmark at det måske ikke mere er muligt at fremstille dem på papirets to dimensioner, og det er mit problem.’ (Høeg 1999: 314)

### **3. The materiality of the nation: body and soil**

A compelling trope in all three novels is the human body and the earth on which it lives. This also, I would argue, constitutes a means of primeval linkage of community which has often been passed over by textually-based nation-theory. As discussed in

chapter 4, recent scholarship has re-discovered the body as the site of human experience, after its eclipse to make way for the subject as the site of identity discourses. The body is intimately related to the *øjeblik* as outlined above, for the experience of lived space has its centre(s) in the body, starting with the sensations it experiences and the things it comes into contact with (Middleton & Woods 2000: 286). The most basic awareness of time, too, begins with the body and its circadian rhythms, its growth and deterioration.

Knudsen (2002b) has shown how texts which privilege grotesque and intense moments can open up a space between the text and the reader, in which the reader participates through affect. Middleton & Woods insist on the kinesthetic memory with which texts are imbued through incorporating practices (2000: 6). It may be possible to envisage a dimension to the postnational model reader that would supplement an appeal to national knowledge with a certain national *kropslighed*. Anderson's original hypothesis (1991) insists that nineteenth-century fiction seeped into reality and contributed to bodily action in the name of the nation (soldiery, for example; we might also point to the civil and diplomatic services, the Scouting movement, playing for the national football team...).

The concern, in *I dag*, with the materiality of memory has already been discussed at length in chapter 4. The cells of the brain, their functioning evolving over time – ‘sekund lagt på sekund i millioner af år’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 63) – links human bodies together in a common evolutionary culture of practice and learning. And yet the *biological* lifetime of those same cells does not correspond to the *biographical* lifetime of a human; as Anderson muses, ‘[a]gainst biology’s demonstration that



every single cell in a human body is replaced over seven years, the narratives of autobiography and biography flood print-capitalism's market year by year' (1991: 204). His explanation for this anomaly – the setting of (auto)biography in homogeneous, empty time – is an obvious analogy for the nation's projected biography that shores up its identity against the constant attrition and replacement of its citizens. And yet the unproblematic placement of national and personal narrative in homogeneous, empty time jars, now; can it be that the impact of post-Einstein and post-Hawking spacetime has also relativised the status of the human body in the universe? After all, cosmological and atomic time can be interpreted to leave psychological time a mere function of physical deterioration (Middleton & Woods 2000: 127).

In the case of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, as argued in chapter 2, the critique of Danish civilisation is founded in a concern with the atavistic, a recognition that we who developed the sciences are still subject to the laws of that nature we think we have mastered; we who invented time are still floundering in a timeless swamp, where change is manifested only by organic processes. The history of human civilisation is only a vain battle to build on muck, to clean away all trace of the organic matter our bodies – and the stars themselves – are made from. The novel's eschatology is founded in scatology, and the materiality of time – the dance of the atoms – is the resulting revelation.

Though the community of Viborg in *Byen og verden* can most powerfully be read as a community of voices, this same characteristic also implies a materiality that supplements that of memory and of time, as above: the materiality of language. The

concern in the novel with sociolect, dialect and accent depends on a textual mimesis of a more elementary breathing and exercise of the speech organs. Even an appeal to Bakhtin's analysis of 'Discourse in the Novel' (1981: 259-422) leads us to discover his deliberate return to social speech types, 'oral everyday narration' (262) and their stylisation in text. The language of the national community – which, in the case of Viborg, is rendered suspect insofar as it deviates from local speech patterns – is not only suggestive of a 'horizonless past' and a 'contemporaneous unisonance' (Anderson 1991: 144-5); it is also rooted in the bodies of the people who speak it. And 'nothing,' Anderson goes on, 'connects us more affectively to the dead than language' (145).

While the magical realism of unlikely subjective experiences of time allows the majority of characters to be revenant still at the end of *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, the high death count in *I dag* is rivalled by that of *Byen og verden*. The narrative of the latter, though, tends not to hover around the death beds, smelling and gazing, as *I dag* does. The deaths in *Byen og verden* are often recounted as spectacular but seldom witnessed (though the body of Niels Asmus Larsen, for example, can be seen as a locus of viral infection of the nation, with HIV). Nevertheless, the role of the dead, as body and memory, in the local and national communities manifests itself in the non-linear spacetime of both novels, which has characters moving back and forward over the threshold between life and death, depending on the date of the hi/story or the reach of the interjection. *I dag* often slips in a foreshadowing reference to a character's date and cause of death; and in the non-linear universe of *Byen og verden* a chapter in which a character is alive and well may be placed 'after' his death

(again, Niels Asmus Larsen springs to mind: episodes XV and XC recount his death and his childhood, respectively).

Anderson both begins and ends with death. He sites the origin of the national idea at the waning of religion in the eighteenth century, suggesting that the twin functions of explaining death and synthesising continuity were then passed to the nation (1991: 10-11). Death, he argues, drawing *Imagined Communities* to a close, is also the structuring principle of the nation's biography, both the 'myriad anonymous events' and the exceptional or heroic passings that stud the narrative (205-6). But the community of the dead need not be located in homogeneous, empty time; Foucault's heterotopia of the cemetery has the function of a shadow-community with affective and hi/storical links to almost every household (1998: 180). Baudrillard, meanwhile, sees a new cult of the dead developing as we recycle historical images of our ancestors endlessly:

'Celebration and commemoration are themselves merely the soft form of necrophagous cannibalism, the homeopathic form of murder by easy stages. This is the work of the heirs, whose *ressentiment* towards the deceased is boundless. Museums, jubilees, festivals, complete works, the publication of the tiniest of unpublished fragments - all this shows we are entering an active age of *ressentiment* and repentance.' (1994b: 22)

#### **4. Ending, endism and the hypertelic moment**

Implicit in the title of the central novel, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede*, is the concept of the century as a stage upon which various scenarios are played out. Two of the three novels mark the century's beginning with the birth of a character.

*Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* has Carl Laurids, whose birth-date hovers

unverifiably around 'nytårsnat år 1900' (Høeg 1997: 11); *Byen og verden* marks the first day of 1900 with the birth of Holger Zennt Marsk Ringvad, whose idiosyncratic middle name is chosen to commemorate the new century burgeoning along with Viborg's newest offspring (Hultberg 1992: 96-97). Less precise, but nevertheless made explicit, in *I dag*: the second episode sees Elva celebrating her fifty-second birthday in 1954 (Grønfeldt 1998: 13), two years out of sync with the century, just as the text stops two years before its publication. Just as the first babies of the new millennium were paraded in newspapers of 1 January 2000, the coincidence of a new century with a birth allows for a metonymic charting of the youth, maturity and hoary old age of the century that keeps pace with its children. The date in question need not be the turn of a century, of course; it is enough that the births occur on a day of significance for the social group. Indeed, Salman Rushdie's magical realist classic, *Midnight's Children* (1981), is structured around the phenomenon of the demographic spread of live births on August 15, 1947, the night of India's accession to independent statehood, and the crucial point in time at which these children come into the world is sufficient to endow them with a magical connection that far surpasses, but resembles structurally, the imagined bonds of nationality. The narrator, Saleem Sinai, recounts the felicitous timing of his nativity thus:

'Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And outside the window, fireworks and crowds.' (Rushdie 1995: 9)

Thus, although the three Danish novels refuse to commence at the beginning of the century – *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* revs up from a standing start in the extended seventeenth century of Mørkhøj, *Byen og verden* conceals its chronology in

a network of out-of-synch tales, and *I dag*'s first episode lies mid-century, well inside the likely bounds of living memory – the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries is embedded in the texts; we might even say personified.

Safely on the other side of the year 2000, the turn of the millennium is of less import to us. However, the anticipation of this rounded date, a vagary of the Western Christian calendar, haunted the culture of the 1990s. That this end of a century and a millennium coincided with an intellectual *Zeitgeist* of endism, as alluded to in Chapter 1, made the date all the more mythical. It became, as Umberto Eco has argued, a lodestone for a complex of historical developments which heralded the 'collapse of the great ideologies'. '[E]ven associating an earthquake with the year 2000 is a symptom of interpretive paranoia,' he goes on; 'is it the year 2000 or the fall of the Berlin Wall which creates such behaviour?' (Eco et al. 1999: 177). The facets of 'endism' which have been explored in the present study of the spacetime of the national imagination – that is, the suspicion of linear time, modern history, and of the nation itself – are part and parcel of a welter of anxieties both postmodern and ancient that built up a head of steam in the popular imagination as the twentieth century neared its close.

Berressem uses the American novelist Douglas Coupland's notation of his own narrative entropy – 'denarration' – as a term with wider applicability to late twentieth-century texts that use proliferating or decelerating hi/stories to stave off the end, like twentieth-century Sheherazades. People, especially celebrities, whose lives have disintegrated into a field of disjointed images and facts are said to be 'denarrated'; the trajectory of their life-history has been dispersed into a multitude of fragmented ideas

and images (Berressem 2002: 254), or, as Baudrillard would have it, '[m]eteoric events, of the same chaotic inconsequence as cloud formations' (1994b: 19).

These three novels are not 'apocalyptic' or 'eschatological' in the sense that they do not envision a post-apocalyptic world. While *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* refers explicitly to a forthcoming (but postponed beyond the text's end) 'katastrofe og undergang' (Høeg 1999: 234), it can be argued that *Byen og verden* and *I dag* both contain an implicit entropy, an asymptotic approach to the end of their century, through a de-narration, or proliferation of hi/stories. In one sense, the hypertelic moment – beyond the end – will never be broached, for the *telos* (the end of history, the end of the novel) is always in the future for as long as the 'text' (of history, of the novel) is read; in another sense, in retrospectively analysing the 'end' of history, the nation, and so on, we have always already reached the hypertelic moment.

Baudrillard offers three pataphysical possibilities, playing with the concept of simulacrum, to explain how history in our time has stuttered to a stop, and started to reverse. Serendipitously, they each speak to particular features of the three novels.

The first is that history has achieved Escape Velocity:

'...one might suppose that the acceleration of modernity, of technology, events and media, of all exchanges – economic, political and social – has propelled us to "escape velocity", with the result that we have flown free of the referential sphere and of history [...] we have taken leave of a certain space-time, passed beyond a certain horizon in which the real is possible because gravitation is still strong enough for things to be reflected and thus in some way to endure and have some consequence.'

(Baudrillard 1994b: 1)

It is the interaction of the mythic and the modern experiences of time that forms the distinctive texture of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Forestilling om det tyvende*

*århundrede*, though with one essential difference. While the two novels share a sense of *enclosure*, only the former provides some sense of *closure*: apocalyptic closure. The linear element of time in Márquez's text is eschatological: '[t]he history of Macondo [...] is a monumental fiction of succession and ending, of communal and narrative fulfilment [...] García Márquez uses the patterns of apocalypse to structure and direct his temporal fictions, and to relate human time to the time of the universe.' (Zamora 1989: 25) As the last pages of the gypsy Mequíades' manuscript are deciphered, the fate it foretells comes to pass; Macondo is 'wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men' (Márquez 1972:422). *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* warns of impending disaster and apocalypse, but its approach to the end of the twentieth century is asymptotic, an effect that is retrospectively intensified by the last page of the text reaching 1989, the year after its publication, and a year which would come to represent, according to the much-maligned commentator Francis Fukuyama, the end of history, in the sense of the ultimate triumph of liberal democracy.

Høeg's texts are renowned for their bewitching beginnings but wriggle out of closure. The title *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* is taken from the last, daedalian line of the Danish text: '...noget må der gøres og før vi kan gøre noget er vi nødt til at gøre os en forestilling om det tyvende århundrede' (Høeg 1999: 335). Mary Kay Norseng has noted that Høeg's later novel, *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*, ends with a white-out that is both meteorological and textual: as the ice thins and the temperature drops, the villain loses his bearings, 'returning all, we might say, to the blank page' (Norseng 1997: 54). A similar meshing of textual topography and language seems to occur in *Forestilling*: language becomes a bubbling swamp,

dragging us down into a cesspit of conjunctions and subclauses which reaches its climax in the interminable concluding sentence of fifteen lines or more, seeming almost to consume itself as it reaches its gurgling end, only to wash us back to the beginning of the novel, demanding that the task – the *forestilling* – be repeated. The semantic density of the Danish word *forestilling* – performance, presentation, idea – and the peristalsis of the last sentence, a culmination of the spiralling acceleration of time and the proliferation of characters and subordinate clauses as the text makes its asymptotic approach to its own end and that of the twentieth century – presents this novel as anything but a conclusive, infallible history. Is this the fulfilment of Baudrillard’s call for a history based in a ‘poetic convulsion’, ‘a subtle form of return and anaphora’?

As the text approaches 1989 and the narrator fears ‘impending disaster and decline’, he explains why he has taken to writing:

‘De love og regler og systemer og mønstre som min slægt og alle andre i Danmark har overtrådt og rettet sig efter og skubbet til og vredet sig under i 200 år, de er nemlig nu *i boblende opløsning* [...] og derfor har jeg lyst til at råbe om hjælp, har vi ikke allesammen brug for at kalde på nogen?, og jeg har altså kaldt på fortiden’ (Høeg 1999: 334, my emphasis).

The last gathering – ‘to date’ – of Mads’ clan is at the launch of a ship gifted to the nation ( ‘der var så mange mennesker at man måske endog kan sige at Folket var der’, 332) by this family. As the Prime Minister launches it he heralds Denmark’s voyage into the new millennium, although, as Mads notes, the boat is floating aimlessly on the old city moat, the silty Sortedam Lake.



On the other side of the year 2000, we may wish to make sense of this ending, and so I have called out to Baudrillard, that consummately scatological eschatologist:

‘In our non-Euclidean *fin-de-siècle* space, a baleful curvature unfailingly deflects all trajectories [...] Ségalen says that once the Earth has become a sphere, every movement distancing us from a point by the same token also brings us closer to that point. This is true of time as well. Each apparent movement of history brings us imperceptibly closer to its antipodal point, if not indeed to its starting point [...] By this retroversion of history to infinity, this hyperbolic curvature, the century itself is escaping its end.’ (Baudrillard 1994b:10-11)

Although it demands that more hi/stories be told, *Forestilling om det tyvende århundrede* also tries to maintain a linear trajectory towards the endlessly receding end of the twentieth century. In a textual universe which privileges and concretises the subjective experience of time – the stasis of Mørkhøj, Maria’s six-year pregnancy, the *tidskaos* of Rudkøbing – an ever-receding temporal horizon is perfectly (im)plausible.

The Danish historian Søren Mørch, we recall, uses the poignant image of an unwound Bornholmerur to ‘time’ the winding down of the history of the nation-state: ‘tik, tak, tik, tak...tik.....tak.....tik’ (Mørch 1996: 542). Another of Baudrillard’s hypotheses as to how history is escaping its end depends on the observation of physicists that time slows when it encounters a very dense object. Our societies, Baudrillard says, have this kind of density, a force of inertia:

‘This inert matter of the social is not produced by a lack of exchanges, information or communication, but by the multiplication and saturation of exchanges. It is the product of the hyperdensity of cities, commodities, messages and circuits. It is the cold star of the social and, around that mass, history is also cooling. Events follow one upon another, cancelling each other out in a state of indifference.’ (Baudrillard 1994b: 3)

Like the history of Macondo, the history of Viborg in *Byen og verden* is closed in on itself, and yet perpetually open, given the potential linking of its hi/stories to other, untold hi/stories. What results is a white noise in which certain events are remembered, told and re-told, some connecting with others; but not even the trajectories of individual lives are, to borrow from Mads, 'enkelt og udtømmende', for conflicting and proliferating accounts supplement and destabilise the perspective of *livs-* and *slægtshistorier*. The minutiae of so many townspeople's lived experience preclude an 'escape velocity' that would point the narrative forwards and out of the twentieth century. Though the advent of AIDS marks the arrival of the text in the 1980s at least, the ballast lies in the 1940s and 1950s, the period on which most of the episodes centre. The relative '(hyper)density' of hi/stories from that period, we might say, retards history mid-century, so that only a few accounts from the century's first and last decades reach us. If the episodes were arranged chronologically, the relative paucity of hi/stories from either end of the century would be immediately obvious; but such an arrangement would tend to undermine the subjective refraction and temporal delay implicit in *bysladder* as a heterodox mode of historiography.

The explicit concern, in *I dag*, with the relaying and simplification of events through the modern media is shared by Baudrillard, who sees the sophistication of broadcasting as complicit in the disappearance of history. He blames:

'that famous feedback effect which is produced in acoustics by a source and a receiver being too close together and in history by an event and its dissemination being too close together and thus interfering disastrously [...] We shall never again know what history was before its exacerbation into the technical perfection of news.' (1994b: 5-6)

This anxiety is echoed by the intrusion of TV- and radio-news items into the episodes of *I dag*. The tendency of the media to select representative events and therefore impose a meaningful narrative upon them is noted: ‘De vælger [...] én krig, mens folkemord og overgreb huserer alle steder. De skaber orden i kaos, skiller godt og ondt.’ (Grønfeldt 1998: 38-9). The nameless protagonist of 30 June 1992 checks the teletext news obsessively and notes the ‘interessante nuanceforskelle’ that crop up periodically, but cannot differentiate between real events and her beloved soap-operas (254).

But the vanishing of history through entropy is also apparent in *I dag*, as the immediacy of the endless iteration of ‘todays’ cuts across the accumulative chronology of the calendar. Nowhere is the paradox of the recurrence of ‘today’ more poignantly illustrated than Stella’s ‘firtusindetohundredeogtrediv’ (100) afternoons in the *plejehjem*. The trajectory of *I dag*’s hi/stories is towards the *plejehjem*, where linear time dissolves into institutional rhythms and routines, and opens out either into the heterochrony of death or into interminable catatonia, as in Stella’s case: ‘i totusindesyvhundredeogotte døgn lå hun i sengen og så lys og mørke samle sig under loftet og brede sig til resten af værelset og verden’ (100). This kind of time, at the end of life, displays the hyperbolic curvature of Baudrillard’s (after Ségalen’s) spherical time. As Verner comments in the last lines of the text, in 1996, ‘[f]ortiden er lyslevende for dem, der endnu sover, og for dem, der lige er vågnet. Fremtiden er fastlagt.’ (292) Once in the *plejehjem*, a life cannot ‘stand open to the future’; like the apocalypse or the year 2000, the end that comes with death is endlessly deferred, for once it comes it cannot be remembered and therefore be said to have ‘happened’ (Baudrillard 1994b: 7).

\* \* \*

Why, then, *recycling the century*?

'We shall not be spared the worst – that is, *History will not come to an end* – since the leftovers, all the leftovers – the Church, communism, ethnic groups, conflicts, ideologies – are indefinitely recyclable [...] History has only wrenched itself from cyclical time to fall into the order of the recyclable.' (Baudrillard 1994b: 26-7)

These novels are part of the media *mise-en-scène* of history, picking at the scraps of events private, local, national, global, public. But they do not allow events to crystallise into the grand narrative of human history. They do not allow for a distinction between fact and fiction, memory and history, *historier* and *historien*.

Part of the Danish anxiety of origins is an anxiety of endings, for with the end of the century comes the *telos* of European economic and political (and implied: cultural) integration, which, thanks to the *sommerfugle-effekten* (Mørch 1996: 521-33), the Danes managed to retard indefinitely. The series of referenda on the successive EU-treaties of the 1990s, and on the Single European Currency around the turn of the millennium, served as a symbolic chronology of national historical dissipation.

During the same period, the acceleration of global exchange of culture and capital, and the proliferation of visual and vociferous minority identities, have permeated the national space. The compulsive recycling of images, ideas and ideologies that Baudrillard sees as characteristic of pre-millennial Europe and America is caught up in the search for familiar identities, be they national, religious or marginal, and so the mysterious persistence of the national idea, as well as of other, smaller- or larger-scale

identities, is best contextualised as a response to the convulsions of what Harvey (1990) identified as the most fundamental feature of the postmodern condition: 'space-time compression'.

That these novels are so concerned to probe the character of the times, spaces and hi/stories of the nation could be considered a reaction against the sense that the national past is now accessible only as simulacrum. A founding tenet of the Danish national discourse is its own 'ironisk distance': 'den ikke-nationalistiske måde at være national på er netop et særkende ved danskernes danskhed' (Østergård 1992: 55). A suspicion of the contingency of national(ist) pedagogy can co-exist, therefore, in the Danish imagination, with a performative negotiation of the spacetime of the national community; the tentative enunciation of positions of internal marginality and liminality opens up a double-time and double-space in which the shock of difference is not mere heterogeneity or multiculturalism but a re-structuring of homogeneous national spacetime as multiple and diffuse, but, nonetheless, still *national*.

And so the obverse also obtains, that the national past is fragmentarily reconstructed in these novels; they themselves are a 'prosthetic' living memory (Middleton & Woods 2000: 5), a space in which the act of reading is a participatory performance of shifting group identity. The nation, as Anderson's seminal work reassures us, is *imagined* but not *imaginary*. Indeed, the novels themselves could be read as monumental acts of national recycling, narcissistic ethnographic studies, textual *lieux de mémoire*, simulacra of living memory.

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## **Appendix**

‘ “Vi æder vores eget lort”: Scatology and Eschatology in Peter Høeg’s  
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