

author himself (pp. 50-51). From a very different angle, I have difficulty understanding the absence of any mention of the work of Judith Butler in a dissertation that seeks to consider “the instability of the meanings given to gender and sexual identity” (p. 221).

However, these remarks should not deflect attention from the fact that Parente-Čapková has written a thoughtful interpretation of a work that is still, regrettably, fairly unknown outside of Finland. She writes with comprehensive historical knowledge and theoretical care – the abovementioned objections set aside – and positions herself clearly in relation to her feminist predecessors of the eighties and nineties (Päivi Lappalainen, Lea Rojola and Pirjo Lyytikäinen, among others). Most impressively, her dedication to the specificities of L. Onerva’s writing never seems to falter. In fact, the attention to detail remains decisive right up until the reading of Mirdja’s bitter end, i.e. the heroine’s death by drowning in the marshes – as an Ophelia of the bogs – in search for the child she never had. This death scene is, I take it, as far from any ideal as from any ultimately distancing irony. It is, after all, always a question of “real woman”, as Parente-Čapková rightly points out at the very beginning of her book.

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Bertel Gripenberg – A Modern Writer

Anna Möller-Sibeliu: Roll, retorik och modernitet i Bertel Gripenbergs lyrik. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 791, SLS 2015. 352 s.

During his lifetime Bertel Gripenberg (1878-1947) was a very popular Finland Swedish author, who was even a strong candidate for the Nobel Prize. Today he is often seen as a pioneer representative of the traditionalists, a movement known for its opposition against the new modernist generation with poets like Edith Södergran. Gripenberg is not only presented as being a conservative with respect to form and content in poetry, but as a glorifier of war who publicly displayed a fascist attitude. Revealing some parallels to the Norwegian author Knut

Hamsun, Gripenberg's case can be considered a classic example of the rise and fall of a national writer. Unlike Hamsun's case, however, also the evaluations of Gripenberg's poetry have changed during the last decades.

This change of attitude in literary criticism is illustrated in Anna Möller Sibelius' introduction to her lately published book *Roll, retorik och modernitet in Bertel Gripenbergs lyrik* ("Role, Rhetoric and Modernity in Bertel Gripenbergs poetry"). With her reading of Gripenberg's lyrics, Möller Sibelius aims not only to gain deeper insights into Gripenberg's time but also into the processes of composing literary history. Gripenberg is a useful example for examining those processes because his works have been valued very differently in the beginning of the 20th century compared to the time after the Second World War or compared to the last twenty years. Möller Sibelius chooses to present three different contexts when examining the Finland-Swedish, the Finnish and the Swedish literary historiography. This comparative perspective makes it possible to stress how aspects as class, politics and different national historical situations have an impact on critics' and literary scholars' judgements on a writer's quality. It is not Möller Sibelius' intention, as she stresses right from the start, to restore Gripenberg's reputation or to attract new readers. However, she argues that there is a certain value in Gripenberg's works because of his former popularity: His texts open up perspectives on people's reactions and attitudes towards the different tendencies of modernity. She refers, for instance, to how fear for the unknown led to the rise of nationalism – a development that can also be observed today.

Möller Sibelius presents a reliable piece of literary study with new readings of an author who is part of national literary canons both in Sweden and Finland. However, his books are rarely read today, which helps to perpetuate the static and one-dimensional picture of Gripenberg as a traditionalist with a dubious political attitude. Möller Sibelius analyses the critical reactions on Gripenberg but reads his texts also in relation to their historical context by using three keywords: "role", "rhetoric" and "modernity". She points out that the terms "role" and "rhetoric" are used as a "choice of perspective, as a focus on Gripenberg's way to communicate and address his readers" (s. 15) which sounds a little vague, but is working quiet well in the analyses and leads to interesting results. Especially with regard to the term "modernity", Möller Sibelius' findings reveal that the gap between modernists and traditionalists is much smaller than often described – an interesting fact that has also been demonstrated in other studies on for example Södergran (Lillqvist 2001) or Hagar Olsson (Meurer-Bongardt 2011). However, as far as I can see, Möller Sibelius is the first in the field of Finland-Swedish literature who has delivered a deeper survey on this subject with a traditionalist as the main object of examination. For this purpose, Gripenberg is the natural choice due to his popularity, his fights with the new modernist generation in the daily press and his anthology *Den hemliga glöden* ("The Secret Embers") (1925) published under the pseudonym Åke Erikson. This collection is a parody of modernist poetry, which was, to Gripenberg's great delight, taken seriously by modernist critics.

After her analyses of the Gripenberg-reception Möller Sibelius presents Gripenberg's oeuvre focusing on their most important topics: childhood, erotic, man in nature, politicization under the Civil War, ambiguity under the post-war period, the pseudonym Åke Erikson and death (death of culture/ culture of death). Thanks to the large material, Möller Sibelius manages to show the variety and the development of Gripenberg's work. He can be described as a typical representative of the Nordic fin-de-siècle especially when it comes to his poems on women and erotic. Later, however, he turned into a propagandist who uses literature to reach political aims, but then again he can be read as modern author who is struggling with his time in a way which is not so far away from the so called "new generation".

Möller Sibelius shows that, although Gripenberg's aims and motivation differ considerably from his younger colleagues, especially his motifs and topics often display an uncanny resemblance: the loss of childhood, urbanity vs. countryside, war, death, apocalypse, the new woman, nature vs. culture, manhood etc. According to Möller Sibelius, the reason behind Gripenberg's choice of topics and motifs must be seen in the author's ambition to write for a large audience, which also affected his style. In this context, the keywords "role" and "rhetoric" play an important role. Möller Sibelius demonstrates that most of Gripenberg's texts follow an appellative structure and are designed to aim at a dialogue with the readers – maybe one of the reasons behind Gripenberg's popularity.

But Möller Sibelius goes even further. She argues that Gripenberg's style of writing makes him in a certain way more modern than the modernists. He can be described as a writer of popular literature who even incorporates advertising strategies into his works. Although Gripenberg was well aware of class differences (he perceived himself as a representative of a nobility in decline) and politically exhibited an anti-democratic attitude, Möller Sibelius reveals his rhetoric approach of addressing all kind of readers as being genuinely "democratic". Moreover, the exclusiveness of some new forms of modern writing, e.g. Dada, raised Gripenberg's criticism. As Möller Sibelius shows with her comparative analysis, the poems in *Den hemliga glöden* were modern according to their topics but more traditional in their use of motifs and form (even though they were free verse poems) compared to for example Södergran's, Björling's or Diktonius' lyrics. Möller Sibelius concludes that it is not only possible to detect Gripenberg in Erikson's texts but that – funny enough – the parody of modernist aesthetics was a door-opener for a bigger readership to modern poetry. On the other hand, Möller Sibelius' analysis of for example the poem "Jazzprincessan" ("The Jazz princess") implies that Gripenberg might not fully have understood modernist aesthetics.

Möller Sibelius shows how Gripenberg tried to keep an ironical distance to his own profession as a writer, which bears resemblance to the kind of attitude characteristic for Knut Hamsun. Should the reader trust the author or not? This question should also be kept in mind, Möller Sibelius stresses, when reading Gripenberg's war lyrics. Gripenberg was

often described as an authentic writer, but Möller Sibelius is able to evidence that he played a role and designed his texts in a way that made them most appealing to the readers. She points out that Gripenberg perceived literature as a mere pleasure. And Möller Sibelius is right when she concludes that this point of view is much more in alignment with the modern consumer society than with the exclusiveness of modernist aesthetics. Möller Sibelius points out that Gripenberg took his parody much more serious than he was willing to admit. Apart from some shorter studies on the subject, up to now there has been no systematic analysis on the impact of modernity on the lyrical works of Gripenberg. With her new book, Möller Sibelius has filled this gap. She is not only able to show that *Den hemliga glöden* could be described as a typical work of Gripenberg according to its motifs, rhetoric and themes but also that modernity has had a deep influence on Gripenberg's "traditional" works.

Möller Sibelius draws a variety of interesting comparisons. References to several Nordic and European writers, philosophers and other intellectuals are made to show how Gripenberg was influenced by his time. Nevertheless, I would have liked her to take an even deeper critical look into modernity and modernism and to draw more comparisons between Gripenberg's poems and the texts of "the new generation". Sometimes Möller Sibelius displays a tendency to generalize when relating to the historical background of Gripenberg's works. In referring to a sombre perspective of future at the beginning of the 20th century associated with evening, end of times and fall (s. 131) she is perpetuating a male upper-class view. Women or working-class members would have described this period of time more positively.

However, overall Möller Sibelius' reading of Gripenberg is very inspiring. She manages to establish a view of Gripenberg as a typical representative of his time who turns out to be more ambiguous than earlier studies suggest. His poetry opens a door to a time that in several ways is not so different from ours. The upcoming modern society gave rise to similar feelings, observations and conclusions as globalization does today. This is why a new reading of an author like Gripenberg also might provide promising new insights for our understanding of the present time.

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