

## Documentarism and Theory of Literature\*

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“Documentarism and Theory of Literature” suggests an interweaving of two comprehensive topics, the one presumably dealing with ways of inventing and writing texts and the other with ways of imagining and analyzing them. This distinction is sound, since it delimits the field of literary criticism from the field of literary practice; but however good for a start, the approach runs into problems as far as literary documentarism is concerned. This is because of the double gesture of this practice: in “documenting” records of authentic fact and “authenticating” the procedure by way of rhetorical devices, and in simultaneously questioning these doings, documentarism also tends to metafiction—thus invading the field of criticism. In other words, the breakdown of the distinction between theory and literature reopens a kind of interweaving, and it is that particular interweaving which I plan to discuss.

My inquiry is grounded in my previous studies in Swedish prose of the 1960's.<sup>1</sup> My focus will lie on poetics, interweaving theory and literature from the point of view of the text (or type of text) under scrutiny. Poetics, I take it, is literary theory assimilated in the text, and thus subjected to literary practice. Accordingly, a poetics manifests itself as a literary

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<sup>1</sup> See Agrell (1982) and (1993).

method in the sense of unveiling precisely what makes the text become *this* particular text displaying *this* particular strategy. Thus, for the critic to analyze the text is to discover its poetics by investigating its strategies and the corresponding modes of thought producing them. This critical approach is phenomenological and rhetorical in that it constructs the processes of the text by focusing on its verbal imagination. But it is also theoretical and literary in that it investigates the theoretical outlook of the text by focusing on its literary methodology as displayed in its handling of the chosen material. And since in documentarism the question of method is of the utmost importance, not only as literary practice but also as didactic theme, I consider this approach useful for understanding documentarism.

In order to pursue this particular approach, I shall restrict myself to an investigation of the “emblematic” stance as it were, seemingly in the margins of what might be considered modern documentarism.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the stance is relevant, as it corresponds to a theoretical outlook which emphasizes factual observation and various “documentary” strategies in its way of grasping unnoticed significances of mundane life and the visible world. Moreover, it offers a historical perspective, associated with the rise of the novel and literary realism, as well as with modernist experimentalism, and postmodernist didacticism.

I shall return to these “emblematic” aspects of documentarism shortly. What I wish to address right now, however, is a theoretical notion of literary documentarism as a thought mode as well as an art form. Both of these aspects are related to presentational modes where individual phenomena signify a context; where “fragments” operate as thought provoking metonyms; and where “documents” display puzzle pictures, finally turning into virtual thought figures.

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<sup>2</sup> As for the theory on modern documentarism, most important in this essay is Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988). Others backgrounding this paper are studies by Glowinsky, Hallberg, Hertel, McCaffery, McCord, and Sauerberg (see Bibliography).

There is no mystification in this: on the contrary, this presentational mode, with its corresponding thought mode, disautomatizes habitual modes of not-seeing what is actually visible, and even perceived. The strategy involved is in the presentational mode: it complicates simplifications and it simplifies complications, so that the phenomenon in focus—in this case the “document”—becomes re-contextualized. Yet the strategy is not difficult to access. In fact, its double reversal, in fact, is part and parcel of a maieutic (“midwife”) didactics. In the Swedish 1960s it was seen in the light of the new reader-oriented aesthetics of which documentarism is but one example.

Thus, what I’ll do in this essay is introduce this emblematic thought mode as a theoretical perspective as well as a poetics and suggest its bearing on a cluster of phenomena which I’ll designate as documentary, in some cases as historiographic metafiction. In doing this, I shall address a few theoretical issues bearing on documentarism as a literary strategy and also discuss methods of discovering and analyzing such strategies from the standpoint of rhetorical construction.

## Theory of Literature and Poetics: a Pragmatic Perspective

### The Pre-Modern View

Documentarism and theory of literature also happen to be among the most fashionable issues in current literary debate and praxis, as well, at least since the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> And before that—indeed, since ancient times—these topics have posed similiar problems and questions, albeit under

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. the recent Swedish debate on Documentarism in *Dagens Nyheter*, May-June 1994, initiated by O. Larsmo in “Sverige har fått en ny dokumentär.” Larsmo calls attention to a “new documentarism” which consists of a large body of contemporary narratives that simultaneously document and fictionalize historical and political matters of fact. His purpose is to investigate and question these phenomena as well as our “mass-mediated” ways of approaching and apprehending them.

different names. To approach the emblematic thought mode I’ll have to elaborate a little on this general background.

Theory of Literature was once an aspect of poetics, that is, of modes of thinking and methods of writing directly related to a literary praxis. Theory, in this pre-modern poetics, was a pragmatics—although a *reflective* pragmatics. This pragmatics was a rhetoric, and in that capacity it was oriented in two directions: on the one hand it was oriented *outwards*, towards an end or effective function (pertaining to reader/audience/society; and, of course, to political power/ authority/establishment). On the other hand it was oriented *inwards*, towards the artefact, which was understood as a means to this end. In this capacity it was seen mainly as an artistic craft.

M. H. Abrams formulations on this topic in *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953; 1971) are useful. A pragmatic theory, he says, is “ordered toward the audience,” since “it looks at the work of art chiefly as a means to an end, an instrument for getting something done, and tends to judge its value according to its success in achieving that aim”.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the inward focus is on craft, rules, method, and repertory, rather than expression, inspiration, and originality; and thus the inward focus on the artefact interacts with the outward focus on the audience and the socio-cultural frame of reference.<sup>5</sup> This pragmatic-rhetorical perspective is relevant for my approach to documentarism, the theory of literature, and the interweaving I am suggesting.

Seen in this perspective, literary documentarism has a long history, related not only to modern realism, naturalism, imagism, journalism, and mass-medialism, as is well known, but also to ancient problematics of *mimesis* and realism versus fantasy and romance. In this way documentarism, as a mixed literary mode, also pertains to rhetorical issues of credibility and trustworthiness and to demands for separation of high and low styles and generic purity, that is, to the Classical doctrine of *Deco-*

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<sup>4</sup> Abrams (1953; 1971), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

*rum*, and its idealist-aestheticist offspring in the late nineteenth century and in the formalism of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> As regards theory, documentarism also refers to fundamental philosophic issues concerning the nature of knowledge, reality, truth, reference, and meaning. At the other “empirical” end of this axis, documentarism is, of course, related to historiography (and the historical novel), that is, to the rhetorics of preserving fact.

On the other hand, documentarism in the sense of a special strategy of recycling already written texts in the making of new ones, or of inserting non-literary ready-mades in a literary discourse, or even of fictionalizing facts, is a modern occurrence. This kind of practice could not *arise* in the pre-modern rhetorical system of literature since these devices *already* belonged to the standard repertory of this system.<sup>7</sup>

In the first place, the very distinction between literature and non-literature upon which the modern concept of documentarism rests was neither made nor required in the pre-modern system, since all significant discourse was produced and received in terms of rhetorical strategies. Thus, all discourse was ‘literary’ in the sense that it was skilful artifice, submitted to rules, norms, and conventions pertaining to ingenious processing of the verbal medium.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, the distinction between fact and fiction was not made either, not in our modern sense. “Fact” and “truth” were not conceived in terms of formal logic or empirical correspondence, but in terms of coherence, consensus, and accepted procedures. That is, they pertained to the current cultural system of acknowledged authority and the common frame of reference transmitted by oral and written tradition. This was

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<sup>6</sup> As for mimesis, realism, and decorum, see Auerbach (1946; 1968), chapters. 2, 7, and 8.

<sup>7</sup> See Morse (1991), especially pp. 3f., 86-89, 180, 231-233. The general rhetorical background is investigated in detail in Curtius (1948; 1979). A handy overview is given by Dixon (1971).

<sup>8</sup> See Dixon, p. 3; Morse, pp. 87, 89.

preserved in the literary canon and available as a repertory of rhetorical strategies and verbal commonplaces. Thus, all phenomena available within this system were counted as “Fact.” “Fiction” was what did *not* belong to this system, that is the alien, the unconventional, the indecent—and the *new* (that’s how the *novella* got its name and why it was excluded from, or given a low place in, the hierarchy of genres).<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the concept of “fact” referred to any conception, idea, cliché, or hypogram acknowledged as belonging to this traditional system—however “false” or “fictional” in our sense; while inversely the “truth” in our sense might be considered false or fictional simply because *unconventional*, and therefore rhetorically useless. “Fact” was all that could be used as an “argument” in the *enthymeme* (that is, the counterpart in rhetoric of the syllogism in logic) and all acknowledged commonplaces served, however faulty, as argument.<sup>10</sup> In this way even mythic and fantastic phenomena *not* actually believed were included in the factual repertory. As long as these phenomena were “documented” in authorized discourse, like bestiaries (the second-century *Physiologus*, for example), they were also *significant*, and thus recyclable in a new discourse. This standard repertory was comparable to a dictionary, supplying rhetorical categories and words. In fact, dictionaries of this sort were edited (Cesare Ripa, Alstedius); and so were collections of authorized sayings and formulas in *florilegies*—all allowing this kind of verbal inventory to be re-used, elaborated, and even displaced as new rhetorical discourse.

The practice of recycling had three specifically rhetorical purposes. The first, pertaining to the process of *inventio*, or conceptual composing, was to find apt thought figures, that could effectively display the subject matter within a well-known frame of reference. Another purpose was to authorize the new discourse, in accordance with the rhetorical demand

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<sup>9</sup> See Heiserman (1977), p. 221, note 2. Cf. Bredsdorff (1993), p. 14, on the realism of the romantic *novella*.

<sup>10</sup> For argument and *enthymeme*, see Dixon, pp. 14 and 26; and Tuve (1947), part II. Good recent perspectives are given in Hunter (1991). Cf. Bredsdorff on the “paradox” of “documentary evidence,” p. 13.

for *Ethos*, or trustworthiness of the speaker. The third purpose was to establish a consensus from which to develop the deviations and displacements. All three purposes served the overarching pragmatic function of rhetorical discourse; that is, its orientation towards utility, occasion and the public.<sup>11</sup>

This practice of recycling by documenting and quoting while elaborating and displacing is also the very essence of the Classicist poetics of *imitatio*. This “imitation” was not restricted to copying—although copying certainly was part of it (and even constituted a special genre, that of the *cento*, which was made entirely with cut-outs from other texts). But as a rule, the purpose of imitation was not to copy but to recycle new aims and functions. And further, the repeated formula was no mere sign, but factual reality—that is, the culturally- given reality of historical narrative, religious dogma, social attitudes, common ideas of belief, and mental conceptions. This conceptual framework was considered part of reality, since it was the frame of reference within which experiential life actually came into conceivable being.

Also, the matter of these conceptions (the *res*) did not belong to the past; “history,” and “tradition” in our temporal sense are modern constructions. In pre-modern rhetorical culture, what is collectively “remembered” and stored in “memory” is also encoded in the cultural repertory—and all this is seen as *contemporary*.<sup>12</sup> Quoting was speaking on behalf on the *auctor*, empowered by the *auctoritas* of an ever ongoing discourse; and narrating meant making making an ever ongoing story unfold anew under new circumstances. This quoting and narrating was not reviving anything dead, lost or gone. Neither did this repetition reproduce the same wording or composition; rather it processed the same verbal imagination by adapting the same cultural repertory to the

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<sup>11</sup> See the chapter “The Rules of Rhetoric” in Dixon. Cf. the concept of “invention of reading” in Koelb (below).

<sup>12</sup> See Hansson (1993), e.g. pp. 48, 53.

pragmatic needs of new specific occasions.<sup>13</sup> Thus, imitation was a matter of “presenting” the present—or of “re-presenting” the already present. In this sense, it documents the facticity of the present, and as such it also processes and slightly displaces the present, serving to make this facticity “presentable” in speech and to preserve its capacity for future presences.<sup>14</sup>

This rhetorical view, where acknowledged fictions are considered factual, where documents are seen as contemporary, and where imitation is a processing and a presentation of ever-present significances—this view is part of the emblematic thought mode of the late Renaissance. But it is also one of the important trends in modern literary documentarism, I believe, especially in historiographic metafiction as it corresponds to “new” novelistic forms of the Swedish 1960s.

### **Documentarism and Theory of Literature**

In this context, theory of literature may refer to a reflective practice concerning the interaction of writing and reading literary texts. This practice elaborates literary strategies anticipating certain modes of reading, each capable of generating in receptionist terms different individual readings—or “concretizations.”<sup>15</sup> Likewise, documentarism, in this context, may refer to a special way of transforming reality into signs, which we call remnants, testimonies, or traces, and of transforming these signs back to reality—this time reality of a second order: a discursive world, as it were, where signs are things, which we may call documents. A document is thus a signifying thing or, if you prefer, a thinglike sign poin-

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<sup>13</sup> As to the relationship *res/verba* and the possibility of paraphrase, however, there seems to have been some disagreement between Cicero and Quintilian; see Dixon, pp. 16f. and 19.

<sup>14</sup> See Hansson, e.g. p. 52f; cf. Hunter (1991), examining post-Renaissance and modern developments of topics and analogical reasoning, finally focusing print culture, and the function of the “cliché-probe” as “sensual extension” vs. “act of consciousness” in Marshall McLuhan.

<sup>15</sup> See Ingarden and Iser.

ting towards an absent reality or past event, while at the same time being present reality here and now. This discursive reality, where signs are things we call the world of facts. And since documents are made by signs, they are also texts, in this case documenting or documentary texts; the two categories sometimes are inserted in one another.

Furthermore, the discursive world of documented facts is also the discursive world of history: not in a brutal sense of past *events* (that are gone and lost and never really seen by anybody), but in the structured sense of historiography, which is also the mode of historical realism—that is, the grafting of narrative fiction on the world.<sup>16</sup> Inversely, as argued by Hayden White, this world of realistic fiction is also the world on which narrative historiography is grafted; thus, in both these “realist” modes the same kind of narrative logic is operative and generating the same kind of plot structures, rhetorical strategies and literary devices.<sup>17</sup>

On a more fundamental phenomenological level, the narrative interaction between historiography and literature is seen as an instance of imaginative logic structuring *all* experience and its corresponding experiential modes. On this level, all knowledge and understanding *is* narrative, or in Kantian terms, presupposes narrative as the “cognitive category.” So, in these terms, narrative is not a result, but the very process of understanding. Narrative somehow begets understanding, and not the other way around, and yet understanding seems to beget *more* narratives: some are presented or accepted as history and science; others as fiction and literature.

Adequate texts of the “historical” kind are considered true, by virtue of correspondence to empirical facts, that is, to the testimony of those textual things we call “documents.” Lacking this sort of correspondence, texts of the “fictional” kind are considered false, although they may be

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<sup>16</sup> For the distinction between event and fact, see Hutcheon, especially pp. 141-157; cf. Morse, pp. 86, 231-233.

<sup>17</sup> See White (1973), chapter “Introduction: The Poetics of History.” Cf. Morse on plotted history and realism, pp. 3-5, 17, 86f, 88.

considered significant in their distinctive internal coherence. In fact, their internal coherence is a matter of correspondence as well: not to external facts but to an accepted experiential logic and grammar. As a narrative mode, it is describable in terms of phenomenology and structural linguistics.

Leaving all this aside, these narratives are *texts*, and in that capacity historical as well as “documentary”. They are the factual traces of the (perhaps still ongoing) cultural event in which they took place and came into being. Commenting on historical documents, these texts themselves come into being as historical documents, and in that capacity as potential objects of future historical research, of literary study—and of narrative invention.

### ***Poetics of Documentarism: Some Strategies***

Let us now consider documentarism as a general term that signifies a cluster of textual strategies: gathering and rearranging verbal remnants and traces of a past state or event and exploring, interpreting, and reconstructing the past through its present imprints in a process of narrativization. The constructive and inventive aspects of this narrativization is the issue of Hayden White, who, in his *Metahistory*, examines its rhetorical devices in terms of conventional plot structures. Documentarism in this sense, of course, is intertwined with conventions of historiography and related issues, although it is not identical to them: historiography is seen as a discipline, while documentarism is seen as a methodology. As methodology it has been scrutinized by, among others, Michel Foucault, who in his *L'Archéologie du savoir* questions not only the constructive paradigm of narrative historiography but also the very evidence of the document.<sup>18</sup> On a more fundamental phenomenological level, narrativization has been seen as a mental habit, associated with an alleged conceptual necessity. It either has the purpose of shaping and ordering the

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<sup>18</sup> Foucault (1969); introduced in the Swedish 60's as an excerpt in translation, “Vetandets arkeologi,” in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* (1969).

“futile chaos” of experiential world, by means of myth (as T. S. Eliot, the modernist, would have it)<sup>19</sup> or of “mastering” the “agonistic aspect” of the social world by means of discursive strategies (as the post-modernist J. F. Lyotard would have it).<sup>20</sup> Both the ordering and the mastering involve a “cognitive mapping” of the world,” by means of a meta-narrative “plotting” (as, finally, suggested by the *post*-postmodernist Frederick Jameson).<sup>21</sup>

In this perspective, literary documentarism might signify a cluster of poetics or aesthetic-didactic strategies, that adopt and recycle documentary material as verbal ready-mades in order to question fundamental political, philosophical, or literary issues—including not only the ongoing narrativization process itself, but also the very nature of the document. Literary Documentarism thus tends to metafiction: either through strategies of “over-narrativization,” and even overt fabulation, or through strategies of “over-documentation”, narrative reduction, and fragmentation.

The over-narrative strategy may tend to melodrama as in John Fowles, or absurdist grotesque as in Günter Grass and John Barth; or “magical realism,” as in Garçia Márquez. As for Sweden, we may recall historiographic picaresques like Sven Delblanc’s *Prästkappan* (1963; The Priest’s Gown) and P. C. Jersild’s *Calvinols resa genom världen* (1965; Calvinol’s Journey through the World) as well as hyper-realist mystery fictions like P. G. Evander’s contemporary “case-study” *Uppkomlingarna* (1969; The Upstarts).

The over-documenting strategy, by contrast, may tend toward collage, montage, mobile, or even catalogue and list—as in Alexander Kluge’s *Schlachtbeschreibung* (1964; trans. *Slaget*, 1965) modelled on the battle of Stalingrad, or as in P. O. Enquist’s fictional “dissertation” manuscript

*Hess* (1966). Here the documents and data are handled neither as sources nor as traces, symptoms, or even narrative matter, but as linguistic fragments or segments where factual names and commonplace data operate as signs and concepts loaded with implicit narrative meanings and contextual significances. Thus charged, these segments may be recycled and recombined, not only to serve as “alternative” narratives, but to question those narratives already in existence (including the ideologic-conceptual networks associated with their construction). As a matter of fact, the strategy may not be narrative at all, but either non-narrative or anti-narrative—as typically demonstrated by the cut-out-devices in Kluge’s “slaughter description.”<sup>22</sup>

However, the overdocumenting metafictional strategy may also be displayed by less reductive means, and even by seemingly conventional narrative realisms. Here P. O. Sundman’s *Andrée-project* might serve as an example with the historical novel *Ingenjör Andréés luftfärd* (1967; Eng. tr. *The Flight of the Eagle*, 1970), the writer’s work journal, *Ett år* (1967; One Year), and, finally, the author’s annotated documentation of the source materials, *Ingen fruktan, intet hopp* (1968; No Fear, No Hope). Focusing on the *Andrée*-figure as a textual ready-made and displaying it in different contextual perspectives, the three documentary variants project not only a picture of puzzle imbued with historiographic problems, but a textual mobile changing its thought-provoking import with each position of reading—from the narrative mode of the fictional novel through the commentary mode of the confessional journal to the presentational mode of the documentary collage where even the poor condition and unreadable pages are demonstrated.

Paradigmatically, however, the metafictional documentary strategy is displayed as an ongoing research process, “overdocumenting,” as it were, but within the “overnarrative” discourse of a fictionalized factual inves-

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<sup>19</sup> T. S. Eliot, in his famous review “Ulysses, Order, and Myth” (1923), p. 483.

<sup>20</sup> Lyotard (1982; 1987), p. 76f.

<sup>21</sup> Jameson (1988), pp. 347, 353f, 356; also blaming “postmodernist art.”

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<sup>22</sup> Emphasized in the Swedish reception; praisingly in, for instance P. O. Enquist’s “De slagna och deras språk,” and in Torsten Ekbohm’s “Stalingrad” (1965); critically in, for instance, Björn Håkanson’s “Dokumentarism—vetenskaplig sanning?” (1968; 1970).

tigation. Commenting on the means and methods being used in gathering the “documents” and to construct their “history,” this kind of discourse hinges on the limit of both fiction and non-fiction, resulting in “non-fiction fiction,” or perhaps “faction.” This form of novelistic behaviour is clearly in evidence in P. O. Enquists *Legionärerna* (1968; Eng. tr. *The Legionnaires*, 1973) of the Swedish 60s. It focuses on classified records on the extradition of Baltic refugees in 1945. A similar approach can be seen in Sven Delblanc’s *Samuels bok* of the 80’s (1981; Samuel’s book), which draws on the author’s grandfather’s private diary in order to narrativize its laconic fragments and bring its sad story to light. However divergent in other respects these two texts are both processing documents, searching for the truth and finding an endless readability. This readability opens up an overwhelming narrative potential which questions the nature of the document; at the same time it also prompts a personal stance which questions the nature of the writer’s involvement in his matter. The documentary and historiographic project is thus intersected by fictionalizing as well as autobiographical-confessional tendencies toward displacement of the scribal task; and these displacing tendencies, in turn, constitute the forming narrative means by which the self-exploring confessional texts figure as the subjective pole of the documentary genre axis, as its other side, so to speak.

In, for instance, Jan Myrdals *Samtida bekännelser av en europeisk intellektuell* (1964; Eng. tr. *Confessions of a Disloyal European*; 1968, 1990), Sven Lindqvists *Myten om Wu Tao zu* (1967; *The Myth of Wu Tao-tzu*), Folke Isaksson’s *Dubbelliv* (1968; *Double Life*), and Delblanc’s *Åsnebrygga* (1969; *Donkey’s Bridge [A Remedial Reader]*), this subjective stance is explicitly acknowledged, while contemporary reality is documented, explored and questioned. In writing, the subjective stance is submitted to the same exploratory process as the objective material, and the same overdocumenting and overnarrative devices are being used. Here the problem of truth is transposed to the problem of honesty and sincerity; but even these virtues are questioned as either faulty or banal. Myrdal and Delblanc, for instance, explicitly fictionalize their speaking

subjects, displaying their alter egos as figures of the text, but also as points of view subjected to commentary by a distant narrative instance, saying not “I,” but “He,” “JM,” or “Deblanc”. Delblanc even subtitled his book “*Dagboks-roman*” (Diary-novel).

Truth and honesty turn out to be not factual qualities or states of mind, but relational processes discoursing complex issues that cannot be stated, described, or even told straightforwardly. These non-propositional issues pertain to philosophy and phenomenology just as well as politics and history; likewise, the documentary archives in these cases are personal memories and private experiences just as well as newspapers and public libraries.

At the other, “objective,” end of this axis we find the paradigmatic non-fiction “fiction” of Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* (1969), and the like; as for Sweden, similar, but perhaps more complex variants are found in, for instance, Kerstin Ekman’s *Menedarna* (1970; *The Perjurers*), dealing with the case of Joe Hill, and Birger Norman’s *Ådalen 31* (1968), concerning the military shooting deaths of striking workers on a protest march. The paradigm of non-fiction “fiction” refers to narrative accounts of factual “cases” or events where documents are processed by fictionalizing means into conceivable, lifelike, and allegedly reliable stories. This strategy, of course, pertains to the traditional realistic devices of “les petits faits vrais” and “l’effet du réel,” including bias and authorial dominance. It may even, as in Norman, comprise an overdocumentation, recording contrasting accounts of the same event and supporting historical documents with fresh reports, interviews, and authorial comment. But the strategy may also, as in Ekman, comprise an overnarrativization, developing standard conventions of the detective story so as to critically offset romance aspects of the already legendary “case” in question. The fictive I-narrator, playing the double part of clue-searching detective and the puzzled investigator of an authentic “case,” also assumes the role of a marginalized outsider who offers an alternative perspective on supposedly well-known matters.

This interactionist tension between overdocumentation and overnarrativization is seen even in New Journalism, report-literature, and other hybrid modes where dramatized presentation of authentic discourse is the overriding strategy.<sup>23</sup> This is a matter of scenic representation, where an authentic telling is being *shown*—a ‘showing of a telling’—as it were, presented as a cut-out picture, and framed by editorial or “journalistic” commentary. And since it is authentic, the presented narrative is also overnarrative. It is either represented in its authentic state with its spontaneous, original wording preserved—for the purpose of *seeming* authentic—or its original wording is been edited to bring about the authentic effect. While an overnarrative tendency to fictionalize is somehow penetrating the documenting strategy from underneath, the overnarration is itself an overdocumentation of those “petits faits vrais” that authenticate the story.

As for report-books, the device of “showing-a-telling” is extended into a juxtaposing of different authentic narrative accounts or testimonies of a common matter. cases in point are Jan Myrdal’s *Rapport från kinesisk by* (1963; Report from a Chinese Village), Carin Mannheimer in *Rapport om kvinnor* (1969; Report about Women), and Sture Källberg in *Rapport från medelsvensk stad. Västerås* (1969; Eng. tr. *Off the Middle Way: report from a Swedish Village*). A series of documents may be accompanied by an editorial preface or postscript and sometimes also interspersed with editorial commentary and supplementary information, as in Myrdal’s work; and sometimes quotations may be suggestively counterposed, as in Sara Lidman’s *Gruva* (1968; Mine).<sup>24</sup> But the point of the technique is always the overdocumentation of overnarrative accounts of the topic or theme at issue, calling for the reader’s commitment and emo-

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<sup>23</sup> As for emphasis on the authenticity-criterion, see, for instance Elveson (1979), p. 19f; and Thygesen (1971), pp. 12f, 14, 75-78. Cf. the critical discussion, emphasizing “performatory” aspects, in Zilliacus (1977), pp 355-368, and in Printz-Påhlson (1971), p. 243.

<sup>24</sup> See Thygesen, pp. 16-23, 35-40.

tional response.<sup>25</sup> “Medvetandegöra” was the (slightly ungrammatical) slogan of the 1960s, brought into fashion by Jan Myrdal, meaning “making aware” in both the informative and emotive sense. The same rhetorical strategy applies, for instance, in Göran Palm’s “auto-biographical” *LM*-reportage (*Ett år på LM*, 1972, and *Bokslut från LM*, 1974; Eng. tr. [an abridged edition of both texts] *The Flight from Work*, 1977) where the industrial worker’s accounts are inscribed in the author’s openly personal (and thus fictionalized) narration of his own experiences on the shop floor.<sup>26</sup> Using personal experiences to authenticate the author’s testimony, this kind of autobiographical strategy is typical of the reportage genre.

While the different strategies have all been shown to process facts in one way or another, the question remains which emblematic thought mode they each bring to bear on this process.

#### **An Example of the Thought Mode: Göran Palm’s “Unfair Meditation”**

In his much-read essay *En orättvis betraktelse* (1966; An Unfair Meditation), Göran Palm clearly adopts a didactic strategy, which, regardless of its polemic effect, finally discloses an emblematic thought mode. In this “unfair meditation” documents of dominating and dominated cultures, races and classes are seen as opposites so as to mirror each other’s way of looking at one another. It is a reversal of perspectives in the form of a

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<sup>25</sup> This implicit committing-emotional aspect is emphasized in Thygesen, who also stresses the implicit narrative strategies in Myrdal’s modes of presentation—“sluttet episk form,” (forms of epic closure) and “episke grundtyper” (basic types of epics) (pp. 20, 22, 33f, 35-44). Thygesen also emphasizes Lidman’s fabulative and lyrical strategies (p 41f). See also her overview in the chapter “Genrekarakteristik.” Likewise Zilliacus accentuates the implicit narrative strategy in Myrdal, and the emotional in Lidman (p. 360) Cf. Printz-Påhlson’s (1965 and 1971) description of Documentarism as an essentially (non-expressive) emotionalist strategy (pp. 212-214, resp. 233, 235), secretly related to romanticism and romance (1971, p. 245), and even fantasy (*ibid.*, p. 248).

<sup>26</sup> Receptionist aspects are investigated in Malmgren (1977). As for the genre, the personal-emotional, and the literary aspects are stressed in Elveson, pp. 15, 18f, 25-36, 48, 59f.



Sartrean dialectics:<sup>27</sup> the habitual on-looker sees himself mirrored in the (looked-upon) other's look as the one-being-looked-at—meaning he is seeing *how* he is seen. Conversely, the one being habitually looked at sees himself mirrored as a looker-being-looked-at—seeing how *he* is seen. Finally, the looker sees how he might be capable of returning the other's look.<sup>28</sup> The next move, in which the philosophico-political presentation of the documents intersects with a literary-moral one, recycles (explicitly) the pattern of thought in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Thus, the documents portraying the the young western, white, civilized, cultivated, and refined nobleman are mirrored in the documents portraying an aging, bloodless, decadent, greedy, demoralized, and, frankly, *barbarian* beast, and with him a whole culture gone wild (Incidentally, in the same year, P. O. Enquist put the same figural device to the same effect in his historiographic mobile-novel *Hess* [1966], discussed below.)

Palm introduces the Dorian Gray figure in terms of a metamorphosis, which is also an anamorphosis, displaying a double perspective, and, perhaps, a puzzle picture:

He who is merely looking is free to feel beautiful. But after that it won't work any longer. When we are seen, that noble Greek profile and that proud western face which for so many centuries we successfully have shown to the eyes of the world is distorted in a moment and an uglier face emerges feature by feature.

The thinker's domed forehead sinks. The scholar's clear-sighted vision acquires a miserly expression. The young man's blond, curly hair turns grey and lank. The Christian smile stiffens into greedy calculation. The aristocratically straight nose turns fleshy or sharp. The thin refined ear becomes flabby. The democratically even row of teeth is replaced by the rodent's pointed teeth. The loving mouth turns voracious. The white velvety skin becomes blotchy and rough. The firm chin is replaced by a heavy jowl. Somewhat lower the fatty heart is pounding.

<sup>27</sup> J.-P. Sartre (1943; 1969), pp. 310-364; see the presentation with notes and further references in Agrell (1982), chapter 1, in particular p. 32f. For Palm and Sartre, see Eriksson (1982), pp. 60-62.

<sup>28</sup> G. Palm, *En orättvis betraktelse* (1966), for instance, the chapter "Pendeln svänger" (p. 32f).

We no longer recognize ourselves. We have been seen.<sup>29</sup>

The presentation of a double picture is also a comment on that picture, as it prepares for the pattern of thought to come. The presenting mode concurrently interprets and reflects on what is presented: the showing is a telling, as it were, and the telling is a showing. Here the traditional narrative distinction *mimesis* and *diegesis* is somehow displaced: not exactly dissolved, but interconnected in its own way. Similarly, the juxtaposition of documented facts is also a superimposition, transforming the ongoing text into a hypertext, that is, a *palimpsest* (as defined by Gérard Genette), an overwritten script.<sup>30</sup> This is a double-projection, akin to well-known modernist montage devices but perhaps also transcending them. On the one hand, documents are visibly juxta- and counterposed, an on the other hand, they are just as visibly superimposed in the sense that they mirror each other. This means that each single "picture" is not just referring to, but is actually "showing" another—as its immanent reverse Other. And this "chiasmic" mode, as it were, corresponds to an emblematic mode of thinking which in Palm's case also comes close to an emblematic art form in a three-fold composition: "introducing" *inscript*, "showing" *picture*, and "telling" *subscript*.

<sup>29</sup> Quotation in Swedish: "Den som bara ser är fri att känna sig vacker. Men sen går det inte längre. När vi blir sedda förvrids på ett ögonblick den ädla grekiska profil och det stolta västerländska ansikte som vi under så många århundraden framgångsrikt visat upp för världens blickar och ett fulare ansikte framträder, drag för drag. Den högvälvda tänkarpannan sjunker. Den klarseende forskarblicken får ett girigt uttryck. Det ljuslockiga ynglingahåret grånar och blir stripigt. Det kristna leendet stelnar i lysten beräkning. Den aristokratiskt raka näsan blir köttig eller vass. Det tunt förfinade örat tjocknar. Den demokratiskt jämna tandraden ersätts av spetsiga gnagartänder. Den kärleksfulla munnen blir glupsk. Den vita, sammetsmjuka hyn blir rödflammig och sträv. Den fasta hakan ersätts av en dubbelhaka. Ett stycke nedanför hakan bultar fetthjärtat. Vi känner inte längre igen oss. Vi har blivit sedda." Ibid, p. 33. — All translations from Swedish in this paper are mine. I wish to acknowledge the help of Sven Arne Bergmann and Hans Löfgren (Dept. of Literature resp. English, Univ. of Göteborg) in improving the linguistic form; the final result, however, is of my own.

<sup>30</sup> Genette (1982). The term "hypertexte" is defined on pp. 11-17 and "palimpseste" on p. 451f.

## The Thought Mode: Emblem Theory

### *The Renaissance Theory*

Emblem theory derives from a new art form, developed in the late Renaissance, interweaving visual facts and verbal ready-mades as well as presentational and interpreting modes.<sup>31</sup> As an art form, the emblem typically manifests a kind of “combine art,” introduced by a verbal *inscriptio* or *motto*, presenting a visual *pictura*, in turn commented on by a *subscriptio*. This interweaving corresponds to a particular thought mode, “documentary” as it were, recycling the age-old topos of the World-as-Book and aimed at displaying all visible phenomena as “readables” annotating and commenting on one another. The mere presentation of the phenomenon was conceived as equivalent to the documentation of this phenomenon: not as an autonomous thing, but as a *context*; as a conceptual network or descriptive system of which the phenomenon in question took *part*, while serving as a complete *mirror*: reflecting at the same time as reflected—the inner workings of a *microcosm*.

Since all of the different conceptual networks were interrelated within the World-as-Book, seemingly different phenomena could also be grafted upon one another in the same presentational act so as to virtually document the topos of the World-as-Book as a sensuous scriptural fact. Thus, the emblem displayed Thing and Word and Picture and Scripture as corresponding and interacting aspects of the same created and creative process. This analogical and combinatory mode of thinking promoted “impure” mixtures of otherwise separated elements and meanings.

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<sup>31</sup> For the emblem and emblem theory, see P. M. Daly’s *Literature in the Light of the Emblem* (1979), and his *Emblem Theory* (1979). The latter presents and discusses the theories of A. Schöne, and D. Jöns (nestors of modern emblem theory). Also Höpel (1987), who focuses on German and didactic-receptionist aspects, and Russell (1985), who focuses on French aspects and also pays attention to its presumably modern traits. Cf. Agrell (1993, chapters 1.2.3., 1.3.1., 6.2.4., and 10) for further discussion and additional references.

An interplay of recognition and estrangement, the Renaissance emblem arose as a form of “combine art” akin to modernist experiments with ready-mades and presentational modes such as collage, montage, bricolage, mobile, and various documentary techniques on the one hand and on the other a thought-provoking didactics based on disautomatization and *Verfremdung*.<sup>32</sup> Seemingly frozen in its gesture of presentation, the emblematic mode displays an ongoing process of interrelationships between the parts.

Accordingly, the emblem is to be taken not as a work, an object, or even an artefact, but as an interactionist process preparing a certain mode of reading, anticipating an addressee, and playing the other’s part, imagining his or her ways (no matter how *alien* they may be) while at the same time keeping to its strategy.<sup>33</sup> But this main course is without closure: it questions and reflects endlessly on vitally important issues beyond all ready-made solutions. As a strategy, the emblematic process thus aims at perpetuating itself so as to keep the addressee incessantly reflecting on the questions at hand. As a mode of thinking and reflecting, the didactics of the emblem is a process both “educative,” and edifying. It was long *the* means of initiating the process of Christian Occasional meditation.<sup>34</sup> Also, this thought mode, as it pertains to analogical and correlative ways of reading and interpreting the world and human existence, was inherited from the ancient Christian practice of typological exegesis of the Bible.

Being a fundamental mode of thought, the emblem could in fact also be manifested in a purely verbal medium allowing for “word-emblems”

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<sup>32</sup> See Weisstein (1978); cf. Russell, pp. 175-181. For “mobile” (the term introduced by Michel Butor), see Agrell (1993), chapters 4.2.1., and 7.

<sup>33</sup> For the emblematic process, see especially Russell, chap. IV. For receptionist aspects, and the “*alienating*,” see for instance Harms (1973).

<sup>34</sup> See Höpel, the chapter entitled “Das protestantische geistliche Emblembuch,” and Lewalsky (1979), chap. 5-7. As for Sweden, see Hansson, 1991. As for the (Realist) novel, see Hunter (1966), followed up in his *Before Novels* (1990); see also McKeon (1987), and Sim (1990).

(which was the case in English “metaphysical poetry” and in the prose of Bunyan, Defoe and Grimmelshausen).<sup>35</sup> The word-emblem, however, is to be identified in terms of the two main principles of the pictorial emblem, one of which is “Priority of picture” and the other is “Facticity (or ‘potential facticity’) of motif.” Priority of picture means that the emblem has a visual aspect which is to be concrete and perspicuous. Facticity of motif means that the image content is easy to recognize and has conventional significance. In other words: the motif can serve as an argument.

### **Gabriel Rollenhagen’s FIDUCIA CONCORS**

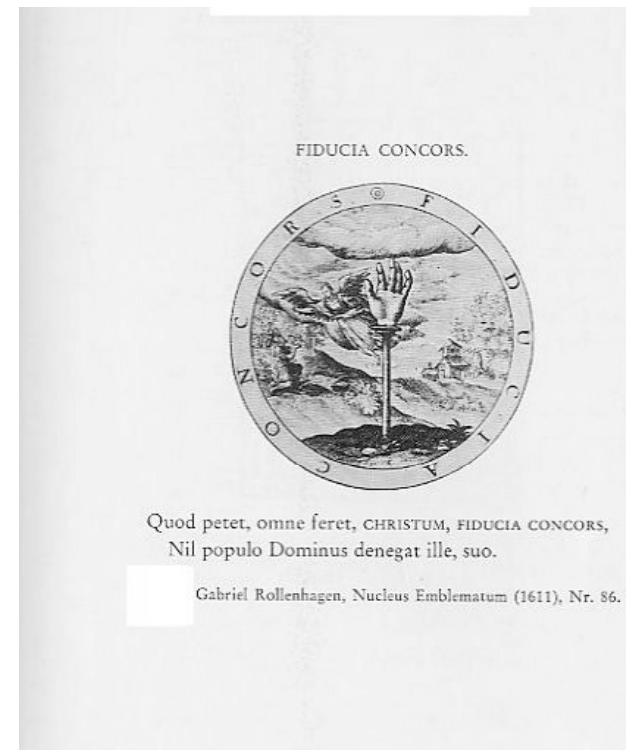
My first example (Pl. 1) is chosen from the Lutheran emblemist Gabriel Rollenhagen’s *Selectorum emblematum centuria secunda* (1613).<sup>36</sup> The picture shows a hand on a rod that represents a banner erected in the center of a stylized landscape; but the banner is also to be seen as a sepulchral monument erected on an anonymous grave. This central figure is backgrounded to the right by a turreted building, possibly an inn or a country church; and to the left by a flying angel. The entire picture is framed by an introductory Latin inscription that says “FIDUCIA CONCORS,” or “Unanimous Faith (or Trust),” and serves the function of a motto. Below the picture another Latin text is inscribed which in English approximates “He who prays in unanimous faith will receive from Christ everything asked for; our Lord will not deny his people anything.”<sup>37</sup> Referring to what is displayed above, and emphatically repeating its motto, this commentary functions of the emblematic *subscriptio*. And this function. it is a referential gesture which does not finish the discourse, but keeps the emblematic process alive as a series of anti-

<sup>35</sup> For “word emblem,” see Daly in *Literature*, chapter 2.

<sup>36</sup> See *Emblemata* (1967; 1978), column 1021. The copperplates are made by Cr. de Passe (1564-1637).

<sup>37</sup> Quotation in Latin: “Quod petet, omne feret, Christum, fiducia concors,/ Nil populo Dominus denegat ille, suo.”

cipations and recallings as well as a display of the emblematic thought mode.



How is the process to be read in its ever ongoing entirety? The question has to do with the approach to the strategies of the emblematic thought mode displayed in the particular emblem. The first thing to notice is the emblematic thought mode’s internally circular character as each moment refers to another in presenting itself. The second thing to notice is its contextual character, as each moment refers to an external text or hypogram being processed in the emblem. The third thing to notice is the facticity of this referring, meaning that the texts or hypograms in question are authorized as “facts” or commonplace truths capable of functioning as arguments in a discursive strategy. The emblem documents the facts while processing them in the emblematic thought mode.

Accordingly, the fourth thing to notice is the rhetorical character of the presenting-referring-documenting-process; it compels the reader to follow the lead of each referential gesture.

In this Rollenhagen case, the motto *FIDUCIA CONCORS* refers to the evangelical cliché of the strong hopeful unity of Christian believers in the spiritual war of mortal mundane life;<sup>38</sup> the central banner of the picture is the exact emblematic counterpart of this cliché, while the figure of the hand, in general emblematics signifying unanimous faith. As a banner, it refers to the struggling aspect of faith as well as to the gauntlet, whereas the bar simultaneously refers to the banner-rod, the sword and the cross. Being the central Christian symbol, the figure of the cross, in turn, “documents” the entire frame of reference pertaining to Christ, his story of passion and salvation; his vicarious suffering, atonement, and resurrection; and thus also faith, hope, and love. Parts of the document are also the opposites: sin, judgement, punishment, suffering and death. The ambiguity of Christian dogma is enhanced as the already ambiguous banner (victory/death) seems to mark out a tomb, yet a tomb somehow guarded by an angel. Thus, the heavenly correlate of the double earthly predicament is in the angel as a divine messenger signifying resurrection and evangelical hope. The turreted building on the emblem is ambiguous too: the inn usually is a sign of sin and mundane transitoriness, while the church refers to the body of Christ and to Christian unity, seen as both mundane and transcendental reality.<sup>38A</sup>

The doubleness of the picture is aptly elaborated in the subscript which recalls, on the hand, how Christ in his Sermon on the Mount preached the promise of the beneficent Lord, who caringly answers the prayers of His trustful people;<sup>39</sup> and which, on the other hand, recalls how Christ described this trustful people as suffering in this world and as burdened

<sup>38</sup> Cf. for example Phil 1:27-28; and Acts 1:14, 4:24, 5:12.

<sup>38A</sup> See 1 Cor 12:12-31 resp. *Emblemata*, column 1238.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Mt 7:7-8, 21:22; Lk 11:9-10; Mk 11:24; Jn 14:13-14, 15:7, 15:16, 16:23-24; and 1 Jn 3:22, 5:14-16.

with the task of “carrying his cross on.”<sup>40</sup> The ambivalence pertains to the explicit Evangelical dogma of folly and offence as intertwined with the power of the Cross, and it testifies to this power and indeed effectuates it.<sup>41</sup> All verbal and pictorial figures of the emblem are thus grafted upon one another or confer their significance upon the other. While the emblematic process never ends, each of its frozen moments documents the same complex “fact.”

It should be noted that all these figures are not merely signs or displayed significances: they are signifying *things*, and things *are* these significances, thus incarnating them as flesh and blood here and now, as (eternal) *facts*. These signs are what they mean and refer to an absent presence as a present absence and vice versa. Theirs is a complex interactive relationship marked by a kind of chiasmic logic that unfortunately defies the sensible kind of description I certainly would prefer. But however awkward, this figurative thinking is essential to the emblematic thought mode which originates from typological Bible exegesis.<sup>42</sup> This interpretation of the scripture was based on ancient theory of signature and correspondence as well as on the Christian dogma of incarnation where Christ as God incarnates, Man, World, and *Word* (Cf. John 1:1 and 14).

According to typological method, each Biblical figure not only *represents* but literally *is*. It is itself as a concrete mundane historical creature, and it is its own eternal-transcendental type. Also, each figure as a concrete Biblical sign has its counterpart in another concrete Biblical figural sign; these disseminated “text-internal” correspondences, in turn, are subordinated to the overarching correspondence between the Old and the New Testament as signified by the figure of Christ. This entails an analogical mode of reading, where, for instance, the sacrifice of Isaac

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Mt 10:38, 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23, 14:27.

<sup>41</sup> See 1 Cor 1:18-31; Gal 5:11; cf. Mt 11:6, 13:57, 15:12.

<sup>42</sup> As for Biblical typology, see E. Auerbach (1944, 1984), and his analysis of its relevance for realism and the rise of the novel in (1946, 1968). As for typology in emblematics, see Daly, (1979a), with the references to Jöns and Schöne.

corresponds to the sacrifice of Christ in that the former pre-figures the latter, and the latter “fulfills” the former (as Christ is actually killed and resurrected). Within the New Testament, the resurrection of Christ is further paralleled by the resurrection of Lazarus, and so correspondences, analogies, parallels, and even significant inversions continue to evolve.

What is most relevant to us in this problematic sequence is how the involved figures also are documents of fact and are metonymically participating in the “absent” reality to which they testify, and to which they simultaneously belong and refer. This relation is consistent with the essential qualities of the emblematic art form: the visuality pertaining to the “priority of picture,” and the truth pertaining to the “potential facticity” of the motif it displays.

### **Bertold Brecht's *Kriegsfibel***

Bertolt Brecht's didactic “Lesson no. 45” in *Kriegsfibel* (1955) offers an example of a modern Marxist comparison to *Fiducia concors*. “Lesson no. 45” (Pl. 2) is a documentary photo of a former battlefield covered with crosses. One of the crosses has a glove pulled over its top, and the glove points upwards. Altogether the image repeats the gesture of the Rollenhagen banner. How is this to be understood? The photo is framed by texts: a short English introduction, seemingly the cut-out caption of the documentary source (in this case an illustrated news magazine), and a subscript in German, an epigrammatical commentary obviously added by Brecht. The composition is thus three-fold, employing a truly emblematic structure, recycling a traditional emblematic motif, and freezing the same gesture. How are these correspondences to be read, and how are the differences to be interpreted?



In answering these questions, the first thing to consider is the context of the book we are reading. The title presents the ABC's of the craft of war. In this capacity of a primer addressed to the illiterate, the book

combines words and pictures as they refer to each other as well as to the external “facts” involved. At the same time the book adapts modern collage and montage techniques and pertains to the laconic documentarism of *Die neue Sachlichkeit*, which comprises its dry irony. The material consists of documentary cut-outs from contemporary illustrated news magazines, and Brecht has rearranged it into new combinations, named “photograms.” The term implies, on the one hand, the documentary and visual character of the material (the “facticity” of motif and “priority” of picture, as it were), and it suggests, on the other hand, that the pictures are not only to be seen, but virtually *read*—as is said in the Preface to the *Kriegsfibel*: “Dieses Buch will die Kunst lehren, Bilder zu lesen.”<sup>43</sup> This didactic ambition refers to the method of the *Biblia Pauperum* of the late Middle Ages, that is the Bible for the poor and illiterate that taught the gospel in figural pictures typologically arranged in correlative pairs of central scenes from the Old and the New Testament respectively. It is a didactics that shares a frame of reference with the homilies, parables, *exempla*, and morality plays that are recycled in Brecht’s previous *Hauspostille* (1927) and his “Lehrstücke.”

Thus, this Lesson no. 45 of the *Kriegsfibel* displays a “photogram,” the cut-out of which comprises both the documentary picture of the crosses and the introductory English caption which reads: “A line of crosses marks American graves near Buna. A grave registrar’s glove accidentally points toward the sky.”<sup>44</sup> Brecht’s added subscript, the German epigram, is inscribed *in* the cut-out, however—or, rather, virtually written *on* the cut-out using the documentary material as its writing pad as if it were an epitaph on a tomb stone. The epitaph gives voice to the dead, the killed soldiers, the killed killers, and their voices comment on the “fact” produced by the picture and the caption. The epitaph reads: “Wir hörten

<sup>43</sup> The wording, however, does not originate in Brecht but Ruth Berlau, editor of the *Kriegsfibel* (who also describes the photograms as “wahre Hieroglyphentafeln”). See also Grimm (1969, 1978).

<sup>44</sup> The name “Buna” refers to a site in Croatia and indicates the battlefield of Yugoslavia during World War Two.

auf der Schuhbank, daß dort oben/ Ein Rächer allen Unrechts wohnt,  
und trafen/ Den Tod, als wir zum Töten uns erhoben./ Die uns hinauf-  
geschickt müßt *ihr* bestrafen”.<sup>45</sup>

In this way the photogram takes on a threefold structure corresponding to the emblematic composition of presenting *inscriptio*, displaying *pictura*, and commenting *subscriptio*, while these parts also mirror and comment on each other. The structure also corresponds to the emblematic repertory of Rollenhagen’s *Fiducia concors*, elaborating even his verbal imagination. In fact, Brecht elsewhere refers to the emblematically didactic practice of simultaneously veiling and unveiling a “truth” by means of commonplace “hieroglyphics”;<sup>46</sup> this typically emblematic thought mode is displayed in the photogram’s simultaneously affirmative and inverse development of Rollenhagen’s verbal imagination. Though Brecht seems opposed to Rollenhagen’s displayed promise of the Lord’s gifts to his faithful, he himself alludes to the Christian dogma of divine justice and punishment, as well as the promise of grace and redemption through the vicarious suffering of Christ. As he appears merely to displace, question, and recontextualize Christian dogma, Brecht might in fact be teaching subversive secrets of Evangelic faith. As the ambiguous “we” of the epigram obviously composes killed and killing soldiers alike, it evokes the idea of both fighting parts belonging to the same community of somehow innocent “sinners”: they are all educated to wage war, to kill each other on the order of higher evil powers who themselves sidestep the physical battle and who force the soldiers to commit hideous crimes for which they must vicariously suffer and be punished. As to “you,” to whom the collective “we” speak from the other side of the tomb, you are the illiterate and thus presumably oppressed readers and potential soldiers, and you are submitted to the same injustice unless you learn how to turn this counterfeit coin upside down.

<sup>45</sup> *Kriegsfibel*, p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> Grimm, p. 520.

Read in this way the photogram displays a secularized version of the Christian dogma of atonement projecting a Communist class perspective; this reading in turn is intertwined with the Lutheran formula of “Justus *et* Peccator,” which refers to the Christian predicament of being invisibly justified, not by deeds, but by faith alone, thus also invisibly uniting the believers in a secret, or even subversive, community prepared to defeat the dominion of evil in the day of reckoning. The ABC of this lesson of war pertains to the Communist view of Proletarian Internationalism, in which all oppressed people unite against capitalist dominion, bringing the class struggle to a happy ending, and even opening an eschatological perspective. By closing the ongoing pre-history of mankind, the happy ending opens the true story—or the Communist society where the realm of necessity is replaced by the realm of freedom, “giving to each according to his needs.” Obviously this Communist formula (explicit in the *Communist Manifesto*), is a secularized counterpart of the Biblical subscipt of the *Fiducia Concors*-emblem with its reference, not in words but in spelling, to the beneficent Lord. The letters of this alphabet are displaced in the literal message of the photogram, its secret lesson being not how to read but how to *un*-read, *re*-read, and *re*-combine the “facts” that are seemingly given, so as to finally re-write the whole story. In this way the gift of the photogram lesson is not a solution, but a task.

This primer thus teaches the illiterate not only how to read verbal readymades, but, also how to distinguish the letters, and how to put the A and the B and the C together, in ever-new combinations. In this way, the craft of reading that is being taught is to be practiced in *writing*, in an *over*-writing, as it were, of the discourse that has been read. It is a matter of imitating the very method of the teaching discourse. The lesson is not what it says but what it does as it evokes a reflective practice. The *Kriegsfibel* teaches that to read the “letters” of war it is crucial to recombine the “facts,” indeed, to rewrite current norms of political grammar and journalist rhetoric.

## The Method: Rhetorical Construction

### *The Rhetorical Process: Verbal Imagination and Inventions of Reading*

Analyzing this kind of visualizing double-coding from a theoretical point of view demands a phenomenological approach to the thought mode of the studied text; this approach in turn demands a rhetorical approach to the *inventio*-process of the text, or to the verbal imagination displayed in its documentary strategies. Altogether the analysis calls for a methodical practice roughly corresponding to a rhetorical construction which brings forth “the invention of reading” upon which the recycling of the documentary material is grounded. Adapting the terminology of Clayton Koelb we may describe rhetorical construction as an activity of verbal imagination operating on an already given discourse with a view to tapping its rhetorical potential.<sup>47</sup> The latter discourse is, paradigmatically, a text, a cliché, or some type of commonplace hypogram; but it may also be thought of as a genre, a style, an idiom, or even a method, as far as these are verbally encoded. Rhetorical construction is thus a potential to be found in many forms of processing discourse, provided that the reader’s “inventive” point of view is employed in an everyday and scholarly, as well as artistic, sense; even discourses that are rhetorical constructions themselves can be subjected to rhetorical constructions.<sup>48</sup>

In Koelb, rhetorical construction should be thought of as a process of a verbal imagination “in which complex discourses are generated out of close attention to all the possible meanings of other (usually more com-

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<sup>47</sup> Koelb (1988), chapter 1.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Koelb’s describing this double approach in terms of “rediscovering” discoveries already made by the text he is analyzing (*ibid.*, p. x.).

fact) linguistic structures.”<sup>49</sup> This verbal imagination not only produces verbal artefacts (which is trivial), but “uses verbal material as the *res* (or matter) upon which to practice *inventio*.” This means that a writing based on a constructional reading of an apparently simple text opens the way for the writing of more complex narrative. It is a reading that keeps to the letter in order to discover possibly opposing meanings, the clashes of which could be used to produce another text. The opposing meanings discovered by the reader are thus not to be “deconstructed”; on the contrary, they are recorded, held together, and eventually elaborated for the purpose of constructing a new narrative discourse, a ‘fiction’ or, perhaps, a “faction.”<sup>50</sup>

Koelb’s favorite example is Kafka: the very matrix of a narrative like *Die Verwandlung* (1916) is seen in commonplaces like “Du bist ein Ungeziefer!” (“You are a roach!”), where the figurative expression is re-read as a letter, which in turn is elaborated mimetically; finally both readings are realized in a somehow “realist” narrative displaying a detestable man-as-bug-creature.<sup>51</sup> This “logomimetic” type demonstrates but one variant of rhetorical construction; there are others, even in Kafka, wherein the verbal imagination operates on the “illocutionary” level of discourse; that is, it actualizes tacit conventions, commitments, expectations, and contextual presuppositions of the entire speech-act or enunciative situa-

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<sup>49</sup> Koelb (1987), p. 512.

<sup>50</sup> Paradigmatically, in Koelb’s wording: “A particular mode of reading, which I will call rhetorical construction, occurs when a writer discovers in the discourse he or she reads a set of opposing meanings whose conflict can become the basis for a fiction. The invention of reading is the discovery process that can occur when a writer sensitive to the rhetorical complexities of even everyday language illustrates or elaborates those complexities poetically.” (1988), p. ix.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20. Referring to the Swedish 1960s, we may recall Erik Beckman’s technique of “incarnating” words, whereby, for instance, in his first novel *Någon, något* (1964), the word “elk” is displayed as a quite fleshly creature, imitating the animal designated by the word (as alive, wild, captivated, killed, and finally as a carcass exhibited at a truck bed), without ever really becoming that actual animal, that is without ever really leaving the universe of language and lexicon.

tion in question. Typically, rhetorical constructions, enact a dialogue which has “the interaction between text and text as one of its principal characteristics.” The texts constructed out of these rhetorical readings are in a certain sense “dialogic”: they constitute “a special kind of *shared territory* in that they *belong equally to more than one interpretive possibility*. The fictional text mediates between the two conflicting positions, giving space and support to each.”<sup>52</sup>

Rhetorical construction, then, is not writing but an operation that precedes and generates writing—an “inventive” reading of an other discourse, not in search of meanings but multiple possibilities of reading what is actually being read. The finding of such possibilities engenders a process of imagining a new writing and of displaying what has been found as a new narrative text. In critical discourse it is a new investigative text which explores (as it construes) the “inventions of reading” found in the other text. In the reading of Kafka, for instance, the ambiguous invective (“Du bist ein Ungeziefer!”) is displayed as literally incarnated two ways: as a repugnant bug as well as a detestable human being. In short, rhetorical construction is a thought mode, operative as an inventive mode of reading with a view to finding possibilities of inventing a new text, that is, the text to be written on the basis of these found (and made) “inventions.”

### ***The Theoretical Framework: Invention, Repertory, Recycling, and Textual Production***

The concepts of Rhetorical construction and Invention of reading keep to well-known theories of textual production such as classical rhetoric and modern speech act and discourse theory. Thus framed, all texts are conceived “as shaped in nontrivial ways by the conditions of their language.” This means that “all writing presupposes reading” and that “one

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21; my italics.



can produce discourse only by *taking apart the discourse of others and reusing the pieces*. We must hear before we speak, read before we write.”<sup>53</sup>

Accordingly, each “new” text comes into being as a *re-reading* of already given texts and contexts. In this perspective, all textual production is seen as a kind of recycling: ~~What~~ what seems new is a finding and recombining of already given elements, a developing of possibilities at hand rather than an original creation. This inventing mode of production corresponds to the ancient process of *inventio* as described in classical rhetoric. *Inventio*, in the ancient sense of the word, was “making a beginning” of a discourse by the process of exploring a given topic (*res*) with a view to finding useful possibilities of thought in it.<sup>54</sup> Note that the critic’s investigating of that part of “making a beginning” that is called *inventio* is “no hunting for sources, influences or other matters pertaining to the establishment of a body of material”; it is rather searching for the method of invention displayed by the text as it deals with the material at hand, the “mode of imagination,” as it were. What is at issue here is “a way of doing things” that corresponds to a thought mode and an inquiry.<sup>55</sup>

## The Poetics: Historiographic Metafiction

### Defining the Concept

I am approaching a concept that might help us understand the interweaving of documentarism and literary theory. In continuation of the “pragmatic” and “poetological” perspective set forth earlier in this essay, it is an approach that derives the literary theorizing directly from the “documents” or the narrative texts concerned. As to the 1960s, some of them are also theoretical while quite a few are theoretical *and* fictional,

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. xii; my italics.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

belonging to a particular reflective and documentary novelistic category, which Linda Hutcheon has named historiographic metafiction.

Introducing this concept in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*,<sup>56</sup> Hutcheon emphasizes a certain doubleness of narrative discourse: the texts referred to are “both intensely self-reflexive” and yet “also lay claim to historical events and personages”—as for instance John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969) and García Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970). In this way, they “always work *within* conventions in order to subvert them,” albeit without giving them up altogether. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three domains of literature, history and theory; “that is, theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past.” Thus, it is not just “historical metafiction”; nor is it “just another version of the historical novel or the non-fiction novel;” it is a metafictionally self-reflexive way of speaking powerfully about factual, political and historical realities, not of rejecting them. In this way, historiographic metafiction serves as “a kind of model for the contemporary writer, being self-conscious about its literary heritage and about the limits of *mimesis*,” and “yet managing to reconnect its readers to the world outside the page.”

### Implications: Reinstalling the ‘Real’ World

Rejected in modernist formalism and late-modernist metafiction, as well as in some current post-modernist philosophizing (Baudrillard), the external world is “reinstalled” in historiographic metafiction, although on new pragmatic terms which emphasizes its discursive and contextual nature. The issue is not whether there is a world or a past, but how we can know and communicate about it. This is no relativism, Hutcheon

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<sup>56</sup> Hutcheon (1988), p. 5.

contends, but an interactionist, social stance investigating the discursive situation of all human existence<sup>57</sup>

This also implies that meaning, reference, and truth are “reinstalled” in language; and, likewise, that value is reinstalled in ethics. Yet, no absolutes are demarcated since the reinstalling takes place on interactionist and pragmatic terms that are inseparable from context and enunciative situation and that conceive of human reality as a social construct. Reinstalling is thus also a means of investigating and questioning the ongoing discourse of world, history, and language without rejecting any of these constructs. What is rejected is merely the conception of “the prison house of language,” and other conceptions presupposing dualism—mind and world, the autonomy of the subject, and the estrangement of social existence. Even concepts of disbelief such as solipsism and nihilism presuppose a common discourse, according to Hutcheon, although as dogmatic stances they prevent the questioning of this discourse as well as any reconstruction of its constructs.<sup>58</sup> Historiographic metafiction, by contrast, presupposes such constructs as necessary fictions, as it presupposes narrative as a fundamental mode of human understanding.

Historiographic metafiction thus keeps to narrative and even realistic modes, but it *questions* these modes as it adopts them, for instance, by bringing together historical personages of different epochs or by confronting them with fictional characters. The questions may also arise as alternative “histories” originating from combinations of well-known names, facts, or clichés that has been recycled as significant concepts of multiple references rather than as historical terms with single references. Anachronism and pastiche are, of course, much-used devices; but so are various kinds of collage, montage, mobile-techniques, and other reduced narratives in the mode of documenting a matter, or in the technical mode of handling a material, or in the reflective mode of contextualizing a “fact.” In all these cases, the relation of truth to fiction is, of course,

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<sup>57</sup> Hutcheon, p. 16.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, especially the chapter “Conclusion.”

se, at issue, and the significance of both these concepts is under investigation. But however epistemological or ontological the philosophical implications, the primary orientation of these strategies is phenomenological and concerned with existential and political matters simultaneously.

### **Historiographic Metafiction in Swedish Literary Criticism of the 1960's**

This orientation towards various modes of historiographic metafiction is quite evident in Swedish literary criticism of the 1960s. Two examples, both of which are documentary and fabulative, and at odds with commonplace Realism, will show how. One exposes an overnarration, the other an overdocumentation. The first is an article from 1964, in which Sven Delblanc investigates the possibilities of a committed contemporary social novel. The second is a review of Eyvind Johnson's historical novel *Livsdagen lång* (1964; *Life's Long Day*), in which P. O. Enquist investigates the possibilities of recycling this genre in service of an entirely different kind of reflection; the review is critical of Johnson's historical experimentalism because, in Enquist's view, it keeps to outmoded historical realism. Of special interest, however, is that both articles tend to figural, in fact, emblematic, thought modes.

#### ***Displacing the Social Novel: Sven Delblanc on “Distortion of Reality”***

The starting point in Delblanc's article, “Romanens fakirer” (The Fakirs of the Novel), is the issue of human equality, an acutely-felt problem in the young Swedish welfare state. Contending that not even the economic equality of the welfare state is enough to prevent the persistent degradation of human dignity, Delblanc proclaims the need for a moral revival, a conversion, or even a revelation, far beyond the sphere of politics and economics. To help bring forth this revelation, he claims, is the

great mission of the contemporary novel.<sup>59</sup> Turning to the strategies of this novel, Delblanc rejects “one-dimensional realism,” as he names it, whether proletarian or historical; this mode is for sociologists and historians. Likewise, he rejects enigmatic allegorical strategies of the modern technical kind (which he even accuses himself of previously having used). What is needed, he contends, is a “samtidsroman,” a “contemporizing” novel, so to speak, that recycles and displaces contemporary matters and materials and results in a distortion of contemporary reality (“verklighetsdistorsion”), but also in condensation and enrichment of this reality.<sup>60</sup>

The material used to this end must be “documentary” cut-outs of contemporary reality: commonplace figures, events and formulas, presented by name or in quotes. Recycling and displacing these materials, this strategy is at once documentary and fabulative, presentational and narrative, even overnarrative. But it is also stylized, and, in this sense, reduced; and that is one reason why Delblanc names it “mytisk”.<sup>61</sup> Another reason is that he wants a special kind of representational effect where the re-used figures take on a double, virtually figural function. he wants them to represent both themselves in their literal carnal-historical existence, *and* a broad context of cultural stances and attitudes, corresponding to the “imago” of the official person.<sup>62</sup> The figure of the prime minister Tage Erlander is, as in Delblanc’s *Homunculus* (1965) for instance, to be read both as “himself,” *and* as a representative of a social and political outlook. The latter representation indicates a supra-historical level of discourse, which means that the sign is both the thing literally referred to and the context the thing participates in (including the significance of its “imago”).

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<sup>59</sup> Delblanc, “Romanens fakirer”, p. 5.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 5f.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

This documentary stance pertains not only to modes of historiographic metafiction, but to an emblematic thought mode as well. The strategy described displays a didactic method comprising priority of picture; facticity of motif; and even the emblematic world view of typological figures, signatures and correspondences. For the sake of “revelation,” moreover, this strategy also displays the maieutic kind of didactics as it operates by means of “overnarrative” indirections, displaces “les petits faits vrais,” and thus defies exhaustive analysis. Delblanc is quite explicit about that aspect.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Displacing the Historical Novel: Enquist on “the Ultimate Freedom of the Novel”***

My example of “overdocumentation” demonstrates the same thing in the opposite way. In his review “Romanens yttersta frihet” (The Ultimate Freedom of the Novel), Enquist rejects historical realism, even in the sense of keeping to “facts”; such keeping to facts is what he criticizes in Johnson’s experimentalism.<sup>64</sup> Anachronisms and “filling the blanks” of history—the white spots—are limited functions since they avoid colliding with established historical truths.<sup>64A</sup> What Enquist envisions is an entirely different mode of historical thinking, one that reworks the very categories of “fact” and “truth” so as to change the rules of the game. Thus, “the ultimate freedom of the novel” is a kind of “lying” which displaces the facts in order to produce a different story, wherein well-known historical figures and events reappear in alien roles and func-

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Enquist, “Romanens yttersta frihet”, p. 688.

<sup>64A</sup> In Enquist’s own wording: “Han [E.J.] tar sig friheten att *låta sina figurer tala och tänka på ett ohistorisk sätt*, han tillåter sig friheten att *fylla ut luckorna*, där historien är en vit fläck. Ytterst sällan bollar han med andra typer av fakta. (1964, p. 688; my italics). [“He allows himself the freedom of having his figures speak and talk in unhistorical manners, he allows himself the freedom of filling the blanks of the white spots of history. [But] Very seldom he plays with other types of facts.] — The words “filling the blanks” is a veritable formula in Iser’s receptionist theory; see Iser (1976; 1978: 1980), the chapters “The Blank as a Potential Connection” and “Functional Structure of the Blanks”.

tions. This can be done, for instance, by removing the French Revolution to the Middle Ages or by having Cromwell strangle his father and marry his mother.

The new game involves a rethinking of a given historical repertory and decomposes inherited facts and truths into figures and significances that can be recycled and recombined into alternative histories. This means that “facts” take on the function of signs; these signs in turn are transposed to a new kind of things, namely, their own significances, which signify not only what they are (a given “fact”) but also what they might have been or done (a potential facticity), had the circumstances been different. In this way, playing the ongoing game will refer to past or future games played under different yet conceivable circumstances. Changing the circumstances of the game so as to lay bare its presuppositions and “rules” is the unique task of the historical novel, Enquist contends, since it is the ultimate freedom of the novel, and only by making use of its freedom as a *novel* the *historical* novel is justified.<sup>65</sup>

The result of this, according to Enquist, is an “antihistorical” and “anti-realist” novel which provides us with a new kind of realism, as well as with a new history, and which displays the real and the past as a repertory of mobile thought figures. These figures supply writer and reader alike with reflective modes of constructing reality without really inventing it, of recycling and recombining given facts, and of questioning the construction in the very act of constituting it. However subversive, it is not a relativistic stance since the is pragmatic: the “ultimate freedom of the novel” is not the freedom of life since no human life can be lived without commitments. That is precisely why the novel is needed as well—for the two to supplement each other.

In this way, Enquist’s idea of a new *historical* novel answers to Delblanc’s idea of a new *social* novel. Both strategies provide a way of mobilizing the given without suspending its facticity, and a way of “contemporizing” history without suspending its pastness. Both keep to “facts”

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

as a repertory of signs and significances capable of producing new contexts, while still preserving their facticity. Both strategies thus are also figural. Enquist’s strategy, however, seems to imply an overdocumentation, decomposition, and dissemination of significances, whereas Delblanc’s strategy implies overnarrating, interweaving, and gathering.

Likewise, as regards documentarism, Enquist’s strategy pertains to historiographic metafiction: it questions historical thought modes and narrative conventions in the very act of submitting to them; and inversely, it preserves them in the very act of questioning them. It is a strategy that pertains to emblematic thought modes as well as emphasizes priority of picture, facticity of motif, and figuration within a system of analogies and correspondences. And finally, it is also the strategy of the fragmented discourse of Enquist’s next novel after the review, *Hess* (1966). A fragment of this text will be discussed with reference to my initial comments on Göran Palm and will form the conclusion of my presentation of “Documentarism and Theory of Literature”.

## Historiographic Metafiction and Emblematics

### Introducing Enquist’s Hess

Introducing this fragment necessitates a few words about *Hess*.<sup>66</sup> On the title page of the book the text is explicitly presented as “Roman,” that is, a novel; but *how* it is a novel is hard to describe since the principle of their order seems as obscure as the fictional frame of the whole arrangement. The title, however, refers to a historical person: “Rudolf Hess” was the proper name of Hitler’s private secretary, his stand-in, and even the ghostwriter of his autobiography, *Mein Kampf* (I-II, 1925-1926). In 1966 Hess was still alive: by acting—or being—insane, he escaped a death sentence at Nuremberg and spent the rest of his days in the Span-

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<sup>66</sup> *Hess* is extensively dealt with in Agrell (1993), part III which also comprises contextual and scholarly references omitted in this essay.

dau prison, where he died in 1987, his case still a puzzle to historians.<sup>67</sup> The title *Hess* implies a historical novel, and its first narrative fragment confirms what one might expect from this genre, although the fragment deals not with Hess but with his aide Pintsch, in his turn Hess' stand-in. The second fragment displays a formal discourse on historical method and seems to introduce a thesis of historical scholarship. A scholarly reading of this fragment is somewhat confirmed by the third fragment, which is to be our example and which comments on an excerpt of Hess's autobiographic fragments. At this point in the narrative, though, the presumed thesis seems poorly organized and reminiscent of a work in progress.

A fourth fragment digresses with biography of Daniel Defoe and gives an account of his meeting Hess, displacing the hypothesis that flagrant anachronism is incompatible with a scholarly manuscript in progress—although this kind of “lying” certainly pertains to acknowledged “truths” about the ambiguous devices used by the novelist Defoe, who was fostered in Puritan documentarism, including autobiographism, figuralism, and emblematic thought modes.<sup>68</sup> The novelist Defoe is quoted extensively in the novel *Hess*, without quotation marks, assimilated in the discourse. This invisible stealing is a frequent device in *Hess*, which grabs all kinds of material, be it literary, profane, or sacred. Its diversity of documents even include religious autobiography, and whether it refers to Hess, his investigator, or somebody else within this veritable oratory of voices we cannot know, since the continuing displacement of discourse also makes the authorial position go adrift. One never knows for sure who is speaking.

The successive fragments of this alleged manuscript named *Hess* turn out to be an intersection for *all* kinds of discourse in a never-ending

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<sup>67</sup> For Enquist's view on these historical matters, see his newspaper article “Hess” (1966).

<sup>68</sup> For the “liar” Defoe, see Adams (1980), p. 106f.; for the Puritan emblemist, see Hunter (1966), and Starr (1971), chapters “From Casuistry to Fiction” and “Journal of the Plague Year;” see also Sim (1990), chapters 2 and 6. For the relation to *Hess* of these matters, see Agrell (1993), chapters 6.2.4 and 10.

process. In fact, the process does not seem aimed at anything in particular except for the very processing of anything—everything. Likewise, the proper name “Hess,” within this discourse, is attached to virtually anybody (or Everyman). The figure of Hess positions all incompatibles in a roundabout of differences, and no synthesis is found or even sought. This is not to say that it is a random discourse, void of “bias.” On the contrary, it gradually becomes clear that its processing of all kinds of “facts,” its very *mobile* character, is exactly what makes the “manuscript” a truly *con*-temporary novel, even as regards “bias.” The novel is all-encompassing, polyphonic, as it were, and displays all existence as a web of correlative quotations (though not in a Joycean mode); indeed the very formula “Existence [or man] as a quotation” is also an oft-quoted phrase within this novel. This means that the figure of Hess, who preserves the loaded significance of the historical name, keeps the discourse within a context of crime and guilt, comprising all mankind. In this way, the figure of Hess questions our humanity and our concept of humanness in the particular sense of *civilized* man: *modern* man, western man, and imperialist man. Within the mobile these concepts are moulded on Hess, whose figure simultaneously mirrors how we see and how we are seen. It traps Dorian Gray in the lines of his portrait.

### **Fragment no. 3: Displaying the “Emblem”**

This is where my discussion of fragment no. 3, which is the first of its (manifold) versions in the novel, comes in. This fragment deals explicitly with an *emblem*: hanging above the main entrance of Hess's school. The first version refers to Hess's autobiography and paraphrases an ekphrasis of the emblem picture:

3. In one of his autobiographical outlines Hess has described the emblem of his school, the one hanging above the main entrance. It was painted by Jean Bulesco, a French artist of the nineteenth century and a close friend of James Abbot McNeill Whistler's, and also the latter's host during his French period; I need not dwell any further on these matters. The colours are white, gold, and green. In the centre of the emblem stands a man. He is on his way out of a forest. He has a cudgel in his hand, his hair is tangled, but his face quiet and authoritative. His visage might be described as illumined by cold confidence. But there is also a trait of mannered refinement, of loftiness, perhaps of educa-

tion, which sharply contrasts the impression the figure makes on the observer in other respects. Around his hips the man wears a broadcloth, an animal hide, and in one hand he holds an animal only just killed, probably a roe deer. When at school the concept of romanticism was about to be introduced, certain teachers used to use the emblem, the man in the emblem, as an example of what was meant by the concept of »the noble savage«. The savage of the emblem, however, has a peculiarity: he is a blond.<sup>69</sup>

This description shows an ambiguous figure who absorbs contradictory traits. The savage and the civilized man are interwoven in terms of “noble savageness” and “savage nobility,” and within this figuration, one is mimicking the other. The effect is that of a quadruple vision, a puzzle picture portraying some kind of monster, which in fact is quite unimaginable. Yet it is said to refer to a factual painting, attributed to a friend of Whistler’s, the controversial painter of the late nineteenth century, in between impressionism, symbolism, and modernism, whose physical existence is a historical “fact.” The historical facticity of his alleged friend, “Bulesco” is to be questioned, however; perhaps he is a “faction” just as much as the “impossible” picture attributed to him. (I have really tried to trace him!)

This picture, however “impossible,” is said to have been used in teaching in Hess’s school as a typical example of factual commonplace, namely “what was meant with the romantic concept of »the noble savage”, that is, referring to a factual commonplace. The example, though, seems to obscure the “facts” rather than document them or to question the facts

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<sup>69</sup> Quotation in Swedish: “3. I en av de självbiografiska skisserna har Hess beskrivit skolans emblem, det som hänger över huvudingången. Det är målat av den franske 1800-talskonstnären Jean Bulesco, nära vän till James Abbot McNeill Whistler, och dennes värd under hans franska period; jag behöver ej uppehålla mig mer vid detta. Färgerna är vitt, guld och grönt. I centrum av emblemet står en man. Han är på väg ut från en skog. Han har en påk i handen, hans hår är tovtigt, men hans ansikte är lugnt och auktoritativt. Hans anlete kan sägas vara upplyst av en kall tillförsikt. Men där finns också ett drag av manierad förfining, av upphöjdhet, kanske av bildning, som skarpt kontrasterar mot det intryck figuren i övrigt gör på betraktaren. Runt höfterna bär mannen ett kläde, en djurhud, och i en hand håller han ett nyss dödat djur, förmodligen ett rådjur. När undervisningen i skolan fördes in på romantikbegreppet brukade vissa av lärarna ta emblemet, mannen i emblemet, som exempel på vad som avsågs med begreppet »den ädle vilden». Emblemets vilde har dock en egenhet: han är blond.” Hess, p. 11.

by provoking an uneasy reflection. And the puzzle picture does indeed display a thought figure as it makes the commonplace of “the noble savage” correspond to the idea of Dorian Gray’s portrait. It corresponds to the portrait not as a separate artefact, or even an inverse copy, but to the portrait as seen by Dorian himself as he tries to recognize the original (the “blond” man) and at the same time dissociates himself from the picture, to separate the traits of the man from those of the brute.<sup>70</sup> This is impossible of course. Within the given frame one trait protrudes in the disguise of the other with the implication that either the man is a brute or the brute is a man, depending on how the onlooker changes his or her focus. The “pure” figure can never be seen, but whatever is seen is thought-provoking, no matter how horrifying. It is implicitly warning, instructing, and edifying and yet maieutic, processive, questioning, displacing the ready-mades displayed. This is an emblematic gesture, corresponding to the emblematic thought mode described *and* displayed in the fragment. It therefore also fulfills the “emblem” referred to in the first phrase of this fragment.

From the point of view of the novel *Hess*, the whole fragment *is* an emblem—a *word*-emblem, and the (paraphrased) ekphrasis roughly corresponds roughly to the emblematic *pictura*, the commonplace of “the noble savage” to the *inscriptio*, and the reflective comment to the *subscriptio*. In the mode of the word-emblem, these three parts are not always separable on paper; in fact their interplay may reinforce the emblematic function. What makes the emblem is not the three-part division in itself, but the priority of picture and the facticity of motif, permeated with the “quadruple” type of thought mode just described. The emblem is where visualizing, recycling, and displacing of commonplaces are brought about by thought-provoking analogies and correspondences as aspects of a self-trial in progress.

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<sup>70</sup> “Egenhet,” i.e. “peculiarity”; further on varied as “egendomlig,” “curious,”. See p. 41)

## Analysis: Rhetorical Construction

### *The Emblematic Principles*

Let me propose a detailed analysis of how this is done in the *Hess* fragment. Since the fragment paraphrases an ekphrasis, striving to recreate a visual impression of an “emblem,” the principle of *priority of picture* clearly dominates the structure of the fragment. This principle also pertains to the documentary ambition of the historical scholar who presumably seeks the “truth” of the “event” *Hess* by exploring the relevant “facts” presented in documents. This historical ambition, in turn, presupposes the principle of *facticity of motif*. Since, however, the visual impression in question is strongly ambiguous, and even mobile, the paraphrase is also embedded in a corresponding thought mode. In fact, it must be imagined (by us) as virtually quadrupling a “previous” ambiguity already found in the “original” which is not the historical “emblem” referred to, but the description of this emblem (in *Hess*’s manuscript.) This quadrupling is inevitable, granted that the paraphrase is a reading of this manuscript and an attempt to transfer its ekphrasis without quoting it. The paraphrase is clearly an interpretation that is intertwined with the comment on the (ambiguous) looks of “the man in the emblem” that I have already mentioned.

As for facticity of motif, the “the noble savage” fulfills this criterion, since this motif corresponds to a commonplace concept and is acknowledged both within the fictional context and the external context of the novel and its readers in the 1960s. Then again, this acknowledged commonplace is displaced in a paraphrase. First, the “savage” is a blond (implying civilized Western man), and second, the whole figure is seen as a mobile ambiguity which discloses the concept as a four-fold contradiction and deprives the commonplace of its positive impact. The displacement which pertains to the emblematic thought mode also opens a new level of facticity, which corresponds to the horizon of expectation in the late 1960s when political commitment contested Western fascism,

imperialism, and neo-colonialism. On this level the facticity of the commonplace motif of “the noble savage” refers to the “facticity” of modern imperialism: it activates the same frame of reference and the same verbal imagination (including the Dorian Gray figure) as the one displayed in Palm’s *En orättvis betraktelse*, also from 1966.

### *Hercules / the Wild Man*

In the *Hess* fragment, however, the displacement produces a reversal of perspective. It operates on the verbal imagination as the formula “the noble savage” is invisibly transformed to “the savage noble”. The two formulations are not identical, but the two structures are simultaneous and the one is superimposed on the other in an ongoing process. Following this lead, we are brought back to the previous “romantic” concept of “the noble savage”: this figure, too, is a combined concept, composed of two earlier commonplaces, both emblematically significant. One is the emblematic Hercules and the other is the heraldic Wild Man.<sup>71</sup>

The emblematic Hercules is the “civilized,” reflective version of the morally ambiguous hero of classical antiquity, the strong fighter, also named “the furious Hercules”. The emblematic Hercules is usually portrayed “at the crossroads,” facing the necessity of choosing his way of life: either the laborious way of virtue or “civilization” in terms of morals, law, and order, and the “schooling” of social life, or the unrestrained way of vice or “barbarity,” running wild in the moral morass of the forest (Pl. 3). The emblematic Hercules, however, does not choose but he is caught at the moment of choosing as he considers the alternatives in agony.<sup>72</sup> The emblematic Hercules is in a universal and fundamentally existential situation; and the emblematic documentation of this timeless fact (by means of the commonplace) serves the didactic-maieutic func-

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<sup>71</sup> For this figure, see Bernheimer (1952) and Dudley & Novak, eds. (1972), especially White, “The Forms of Wildness.” Cf. Agrell, *Romanen*, chapter 10.

<sup>72</sup> This is displayed in Georg Stiernhielm’s emblematic hexameter poem, *Hercules* (1658), a famous Swedish Baroque poem (cf. its frontispiece, below, pl. 3). See Friberg (1945), especially chapter 1. Cf. discussion in connection with *Hess* in Agrell (1993) chapters 10.1.3.

tion of activating the situation as a fact here and now and as one reflected on in the emblematic process.

This emblematic Hercules is identified by his typical attributes: his club or cudgel, his animal hide (most often a lion), and his tousled and untidy looks—all derived from the ancient hero, and the attributes of “the man in the emblem” in the *Hess*-fragment. What makes the figure emblematic is the motif of the crossroads, a scene explicitly displayed or otherwise alluded to by the context. In the *Hess* fragment the scene is explicitly displayed indeed. It catches “the man” in the moment of hesitation, “standing ... on his way out of a forest;” and it shows an aspect that is further developed in the variant versions of the motif in later fragments of the novel.<sup>73</sup> But already in the first version the emblematic moment is problematized and its timeless originality historicized by traits of education, culture, and even mannerism, which are described in the hero’s face. The description implies not only a previous schooling, but decadence and regression; and this regression is itself a forecast projecting present possibilities as a future fact.

The heraldic Wild Man, in turn, is identified by the same attributes as the emblematic Hercules. In fact, the figure of the former is often mixed up with that of the latter (for example, the animal hide around Hercules’ hips is sometimes replaced with the leafy branches traditionally attributed to the Wild Man; Pl. 4). No wonder, since one figure is just as ambiguous as the other and since this ambiguity being his very significance as “wild.” It fits this description that the heraldic Wild Man was traditionally and literally marginalized. He was a marginal figure belonging to the frame of the heraldic emblem and fulfilling the function of shield bearer by holding up the coat of arms. In this way he is seen to

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<sup>73</sup> One version, for instance, emphasizes the existential impact of the emblem (*Hess*, p. 41), and another version its character of puzzle picture and even thought figure, that is, its (emblematic) thought mode (*ibid.*, p. 146f.).

support and present, demonstrate, and even guard the shield—although as a servant, kept outdoors, his wildness is seen to be domesticated.<sup>74</sup>

In the figure of the Wild Man a number of contrasts intersect, or “run wild,” as it were: on the one hand, the traits of the traditional warrior, such as physical strength, aggressiveness, even fury and cruelty; on the other hand, the traits of an outlaw, the outsider, the naive, or even traditional fool. The latter traits pertain to the “primitive” sphere of the concept of “wildness,” a sphere that also includes innocence, and even holiness (remember the Christlike “idiot,” prince Myshkin of Dostojevskij’s novel *The Idiot* [1868-1869]). The aforementioned “warrior” sphere is no different in that it is *pre-moral*, and beyond good an evil in a state of “naturalness” where the concepts of crime, sin, and guilt are not yet invented, but all is life (cf. the Nietzschean concept). The structure of this state beyond good and evil corresponds to the prelapsarian state of Paradise as it is displayed in the Biblical commonplace (which comprises the possibility of evil). The positive impact of this Biblical context is isolated in the commonplace of “the noble savage” whereas its *negative* impact—sin and the possibility of sin, or the Fall of Man—is isolated in the commonplace of the devil and the devilish villain. Evil is primarily not conceived of as aggressiveness, fury, or other traits of uncontrolled passion, but as self-conscious, educated cunning and sly calculating reflection under the guise of the good.

### *Displacing “the Noble Savage”*

As this deceitfulness pertains to the commonplace of “the noble savage” as displayed in *Hess*, its significance also pertains to the concepts of both Nazism (the historical context associated with the proper name “Hess”), and Imperialism (the contemporary context associated with the year the novel was published). In fact the two “isms” are intertwined within the

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<sup>74</sup> However, this “marginalization” must not be overemphasized since in the heraldic emblem humans were excluded from the *pictura*; that is, the coat of arms. See Bernheimer, for example, particularly the chapter. “His Heraldic Role,” and the pictures in Neu-becker (1976; 1982), pp. 196-199.



documentary fiction of the novel. In Nazism, the displaced (or even “deconstructed”) version of “the noble savage” discloses the primitivist traits of the Nazi ideology: the cult of “the noble Aryan” necessitates that he is blond, but also that he (as a potential Nazi hero) is well-mannered and cunning, capable of political double-talk and of deceiving the masses to believe in dictatorship, racism, concentration-camps, and war of conquest in the service of morality, honour, law, and order.

In Imperialism the displacing of “the noble savage” in terms of “the savage noble” discloses fundamental contradictions in modern Western man. As an intellectual he has a nostalgic passion for the “primitive” and “naive,” archaic, and exotic, because these qualities compensate for his own overcultivated spleen and decadence. But he is also inclined to transmit his own decadent culture to his “primitive” fellow-men in the disguise of education and by rejecting in practice what he is so sentimental about. As a pillar of society (a business man or politician), he oppresses and exploits other people in the guise of benefactor and civilization hero, who “nobilizes” the savages. In doing so, he is neither savage or wild in the pre-moral sense, but (according to his own “moral” lexicon) simply evil. It is this doubleness of the figure which parallels the relation between Dorian Gray to his portrait when he sees himself as he is seen.

### *Displacing Himself: the Autobiographical Sphere*

The self-referring aspect of the Wild Man of course pertains to the fact of the ekphrasis of the emblem recurring in the autobiography of Hess, who seems to be the figure in focus. In fact, the figure of the Wild Man seems to play the same role in the historiographic “manuscript,” which deals with Hess and *his* manuscripts, although the latter texts are now filtered through the consciousness of the presumed scholar. This scholar seems to mirror himself in Hess and sees himself as the other and the other as himself. While confusing his scholarly stance, this double vision is part of the “biased” impact of the mobile novel, and part of its fictional discourse. It is a discourse (I reluctantly admit) that originates in the author of the novel, the historical and factual person of P. O. Enquist.

At the time he was writing *Hess* he was also writing his own licentiate thesis;<sup>75</sup> in an essay he has even declared that he mirrored his scholarly process in his novel.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, Enquist was brought up in the northern Swedish province of Västerbotten, and educated in the religious tradition of “Evangeliska fosterlandsstiftelsen,” a revivalist movement within the Swedish church. This may have prepared the ground for his special interest in emblematics and typological strategies since these things belong to his religious background. But it may also have prepared him for his special interest in the figure of the Wild Man.

This figure happens to be a part of the heraldic emblem of the county of Västerbotten (Pl. 5) and the Northern regiment stationed in Umeå, the provincial capital. The regimental magazine is even called *Vildmannen* (Pl. 6).<sup>77</sup> In the 1960s, the magazine still frequently referred to its title figure, although mainly in the “tamed,” subordinated aspects of an amenable tool (reminiscent of the context of the Brechtian *Kriegsfibel*). This Wild Man is a common soldier commanded to behave as a warrior, maybe against his will—or maybe not.

The autobiographical track of *Hess* leads further, not only back to the author, but also back to some kind of reality we might have in common, despite our personal peculiarities. But I’ll stop here, and make my summary.

### *Exit*

All the themes discussed above, be they historical, political, ideological, moral, or autobiographical, are further elaborated as the mobile novel moves on and mounts them on each other. The entire collage of frag-

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<sup>75</sup> Enquist’s licentiate thesis was on the Swedish author Thorsten Jonsson.

<sup>76</sup> See Enquist’s “Sidokommentar” (1966), p. 62.

<sup>77</sup> *Vildmannen. Medlemsblad för Kungl. Västerbottens Regementes Kamratförening*, first issue in 1934. For the coat of arms, see Konow (1980).

ments discloses a montage of narrative fragments and presenting devices typified by Thomas Mann and Alexander Kluge, respectively. It is a *documentary* montage in the double sense that it recycles various kinds of “documents,” and investigates and arranges them they can question “facts” or historical issues. This strategy, in turn, is also to be described in terms of historiographic metafiction. It is historiographic because its implied fictional frame is an historiographic manuscript or a scholarly thesis in progress and because it intermingles narrative and documentary devices and recycles documents that are also “authentic.” It is metafictional because it questions the “facts” of the documents as well as its own methods of inquiry. It should be noted, however, that its metafictional strategy is not narcissistic in the sense of self-centered; on the contrary, it is *other*-oriented as it displaces such modern and modernist conceptions as the self-sufficient ego and the sovereign subject. This is not done to dissolve or destroy the personal dimension of man; it is done to recontextualize this dimension in interactionist terms and in a context where man as related to his fellow-men and *given* his person only in interaction with the other.

This is the foremost existential impact of the novel and of the way its historiographic-metafictional strategy displays its own coming into being. It writes a reading (of the Hess documents); it is read and reread as the “mobile” discourse moves on; the subject/object-relation of its writing/reading is incessantly reversed; and finally it attempts to have its discourse transcended as readers read it as a novel. Altogether it is in an emblematic thought mode, seen in the perspective of the priority of picture and the facticity of motif as I have tried to demonstrate it by applying a method of rhetorical construction to the verbal imagination of the fragment of scrutiny.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>78</sup> It should be noted that the modern secularized themes and devices discussed in this essay also commingle with concepts of guilt and grace in the Protestant Christian tradition (revolving around the theological context of *agape*). How all this is done must be left out in this paper since the purpose here is mainly introductory. See Agrell (1993), chapters 6.1.2., and 11.

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## Illustrations

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