

The Double Call: on *Bildung* in a Literary and Reflective Perspective

KLAUS PETER MORTENSEN

I *BILDUNG*

The genealogical turn

In March 1802, William Wordsworth wrote his famous poem *To the Cuckoo*:

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear,
From hill to hill it seems to pass
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the vale,
Of sunshine and flowers,
Thou bringst unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my schoolboy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green,
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
 Again appears to be
 An unsubstantial, faery place;
 That is fit home for Thee!

The bird's echo-like double call — 'at once far off and near' — illustrates the dialectics of the spatial and temporal near and far that is the main theme of the poem. The starting point is a seemingly definitive separation: the cuckoo's call is a reminder of lost time. The bird's unchanged call reminds the grown man that he himself has changed. But as he now hears this call again, it echoes and — ultimately — restores the past in the form of the bird. Not the individual, physical bird, but the mental state that the experience of this phenomenon originally produced in him as a child.

To the boy, this double call, sounding as if the bird is far away and yet quite near, was linked to a mysterious dimension of existence. What he heard could not be confirmed by his other senses, no matter how eagerly he searched for the enigmatic voice. Thus what the cuckoo brings back to the meditating, listening, grown man across the relentless passage of time is not simply a memory but an elementary form of experience. This form of experience, the child's, has stayed with the growing and grown man as a hidden, shaping pattern of experience ever since. How can that be?

On the face of it, the child and the adult are searching for two different things. The boy is trying to catch hold of a being that can only be heard, whereas the grown man is trying to reach the being he once was: the boy naïvely chasing what cannot be captured and held. However, this difference is only apparent. For they are both searching for something that cannot be found, even though it exists. The very reason why the grown man wants and is able to meditatively connect with the child is that his present longing for something that exists, but cannot be found physically, is founded in the child's experience. It is this elementary pattern of experience that is operative in the dialectical relationship between that which exists and is perceivable by the senses, and that in nature that cannot be captured or grasped as a sensed phenomenon. In this way, the poem describes man's fundamental metaphysical orientation while at the same time positing a new, earthly, 'horizontal' metaphysics in its place.

It is not just the form of this metaphysical longing, but also the grown man's way of fulfilling it, that is rooted in the child's experience. Unlike the child, the adult is fully aware that the cuckoo really is a bird — and not a mysterious, wandering voice. That he nevertheless, in his description of the cuckoo, insists on the child's perception, is not an instance of contrived naïvety. It is because he has realised that the child is present in his own mode of experience. Also, to the grown man, the experience of nature holds more than what the senses can convey. What in the external, physical world has been lost forever now exists as a form of consciousness. The child's spontaneous experience survives in the grown man as a source of insight into the nature of his own experience and consciousness. This insight — as the final lines of the poem

indicate — results in a transformation or restoration of the poet's senses. It opens up a re-enchanted world: nature, where his consciousness has its source, and with which it therefore corresponds.

To a modern individual who has grown up in the 'century of the child', it is only too easy to overlook the radicality of a, in many ways, simple poem such as *To the Cuckoo*. For what in this, and other Wordsworth poems of this period, represents a new and revolutionary view of man's identity as developed, rather than given, has attained the status of self-evident truth in the course of the last two hundred years.

Wordsworth gave this new perception of the relationship between the child and the grown man a striking formulation: 'the child is father of the man'. This phrase occurs in a short poem written on 26 March, the very day that Wordsworth finished his poem about the cuckoo. By claiming that the child is father of the man, Wordsworth not only locates the seed of all human identity in the child, and thus in man himself, but he also makes identity dynamic, a question of the development or shaping of (and by) the self.

The grown man of *To the Cuckoo* changes, not only by biological necessity, but through transformations of consciousness linked to retrospection, to memory. This potential for change, owing to the faculties of the human mind, makes it possible for man to understand his physical development from an overarching perspective. Furthermore — and this is essential to the developmental thinking that emerged about two hundred years ago — this mental activity is in itself part of what forms the individual. *To the Cuckoo* describes this process: as the previously subconscious workings of the mind are consciously recognised as working in the grown man, he is likewise (trans)formed.

Wordsworth's poems illustrate processes that bear a striking resemblance to those that Hegel and other contemporaries sought to express in the abstract and philosophical concept of *Bildung*. The two ages represented in the cuckoo poem thus correspond to Hegel's distinction between first and secondary nature. But in his treatment of the dialectic relationship between these two ages, Wordsworth points to social, psychological and theological implications that anticipate Freud and psychoanalysis in viewing the child's experience as central to an understanding of adult behaviour. For in his cuckoo poem Wordsworth actually turns traditional, patriarchal genealogy upside down and takes human identity out of the realm of heredity. Wordsworth thus makes what I would call a genealogical turn, by which he undermines the hierarchical frame of mind that dominated social thinking as well as theology, and paves the way for the anthropology and individual psychology on which rests what has since been called the romantic or modern concept of *Bildung*.

At the core of this thinking, underlying most of the attempts of the past two hundred years at delineating the development of the individual, is the idea that it is only through recognition, the exercise of memory, that *Bildung* really becomes *Bildung*: a thinking mind making the latent formation manifest. But *Bildung* in this sense is not a purely individual affair.

The Hegelian 'Sichbildung'

Setting out to define his area of study in *Wahrheit und Methode (Truth and Method, 1960/1989)* Hans-Georg Gadamer reviews the verbal and conceptual history of the development of the individual. As Gadamer sees it, the meaning of the word *Bildung* changes radically at the end of the 1700s, as the culmination of a long process. Whereas *Bildung* previously referred to natural formation, the concept now becomes intimately associated with culture and designates the 'properly human way of developing natural talents and capacities' ('*die eigentümlich menschliche Weise, seine natürlichen Anlagen und Vermögen auszubilden*'). Herder talks of '*Emporbildung zur Humanität*' (rising up to humanity through culture), Hegel of '*Sichbildung*' (educating or cultivating oneself). The development of the individual is an inner process of formation and cultivation that has no goals outside itself. In his presentation Gadamer distinguishes between cultivation and *Bildung*:

Kultivierung einer Anlage ist Entwicklung von etwas Gegebenem, so dass die Übung und Pflege derselben ein blosses Mittel zum Zweck ist . . . In der *Bildung* dagegen wird das, woran und wodurch einer gebildet wird, zwar auch ganz zu eigen gemacht.

The cultivation of a talent is the development of something that is given, so that practicing and cultivating it is a mere means to an end . . . In *Bildung*, by contrast, that by which and through which one is formed becomes completely one's own (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 11).

To Hegel, *Bildung* is man's counteractive response to the break with the natural, a new self-made nature that grows out of man's consciousness of himself and the natural world. *Bildung* thus signifies that man is not just what nature has made him. Rather than consuming things, man forms them, and, says Hegel, thereby raises himself above the immediacy of existence to universality. By forming things, man forms himself.

In this ability of man to rise above his immediate desires, to transcend himself, lies the seed of his sense of what is 'not self', and thus his ability to limit himself. As a sense of the universal, *Bildung* is a precondition of human community, of forming societies. *Bildung* entails a kind of alienation, the self-objectification that enables the individual to transcend what is immediately known and experienced and to appropriate what is other. This appropriation takes place as a process of recognition:

Im Fremden das Eigene zu erkennen, in ihm heimisch zu werden, ist die Grundbewegung des Geistes, dessen Sein nur Rückkehr zu sich selbst aus dem Anderssein ist

To recognize one's own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of the spirit, whose being consists only in returning to itself from what is other (*ibid.*, p. 14).

What is called the individual's 'own' is thus more comprehensive than the particular, single individual and his consciousness. '*Das Eigene*' is the larger, linguistic, cultural and historical human context into which man is born, and that determines the conditions of his life. It is this conditionality in its immediate appearance as something alien that man must gradually make his own and become aware of as part of his existence. Though *Bildung* is about identity, it is not an isolated and individual—particular and private—affair. Identity formation is a process in which the self is confronted with what is alien outside and inside itself, thus making change necessary. Man must constantly transcend himself in order to become himself. In his *Indledning til filosofiske Forelæsninger* [Introduction to Philosophical Lectures], 1803, the Danish-Norwegian thinker Henrich Steffens expresses a related idea, when he says that 'Genius distinguishes itself from mere Talent, which is always one-sided, in that it is the most immediate revelation of the Eternal self within the Finite world and therefore, though the most individual, is also the most universal' (Steffens, 1968, p. 141).

The doubling of the self

The concept of *Bildung* rests on assumptions that can advantageously be brought into play with contemporary developmental theories. This is above all true of *Bildung* conceived as an identity-shaping (individual) activity and of the underlying idea that *Bildung*—both as supra-individual creation of culture and as personal development of identity—is inextricably bound up with man's reflective faculties and thus with self-examination and self-transcendence.

Reflexivity figures prominently in contemporary characterisations of modern man and modern culture. An example is Anthony Giddens' *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (1991). To Giddens, 'the self, like the broader institutional contexts in which it exists, has to be reflexively made' (Giddens, 1991, p. 3). Identity is no longer determined by objective, common norms, but by the individual's own reflexive activity. 'The self is seen as a reflexive project, for which the individual is responsible . . . We are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves' (ibid., p. 75). This self-creating act is retrospective: 'What the individual becomes is dependent on the reconstructive endeavours in which he or she engages' (ibid., p. 75). But it is also prospective. 'Identity is a project', as Peter L. Berger expresses it in *The Heretical Imperative* (1979). In Giddens' formulation, 'Modernity institutionalizes the principle of radical doubt and insists that all knowledge takes the form of hypothesis' (ibid., p. 3).

In this interaction of the retrospective and the prospective, identity becomes dynamic, continuously linking past and future. 'The self forms a trajectory of development from the past to the anticipated future' (ibid., p. 75). The identity of the individual is thus structured as a sort of continuous narrative, told and shaped by the individual himself. Only through this objectifying activity does the individual attain identity: 'It is

made clear that self-identity, as a coherent phenomenon, presumes a narrative: the narrative of the self is made explicit' (ibid., p. 76).

The mental activity Giddens describes must not be confused with sophisticated, abstract thinking. On the contrary, he is concerned with a (self)doubling behaviour exhibited by man in his everyday life, based on man's ability and tendency to stand aside and observe, not just himself, but himself thinking about himself. In his article 'on the price of self-relating knowledge: the effects of demystification in pedagogy, schools and identity formation', Thomas Ziehe discusses self-reflexivity in a somewhat different but related way, employing the concept of 'self-relating', and emphasising its everyday, non-intellectual quality. Self-relating implies:

A relationship to the self, just as if we were constantly filming ourselves with a video camera, watching ourselves and commenting on this . . . To be 'modern' today means being able to name and formalize certain goals for the self, which you approach strategically and 'use' in your self-reflection. This is not the same as intellectualization (that is, it need not be); rather, it is a voluntary submission to conceptual or emblematic goals for the self . . . The self is divided into an emotional self (which is vulnerable) and a perceiving self (which observes itself) (translated from Jacobsen, 1997, p. 29).

However, contrary to what seems to be a prevailing notion, this doubling of the self that Giddens and Ziehe describe, each on his own premises, is not a specifically modern phenomenon, but rather an aspect of human nature. The doubling occurs in human behaviour in all known cultures, but in ways that differ greatly within a given culture and from one culture to another. Neither is it exclusively an adult phenomenon; it is also of decisive importance at the earliest stages of human development. It is a widely held, though not undisputed, assumption that the baby perceives itself as part of the mother's body.¹ In this oceanic state there is no sense of self. The sense of self emerges only when the infant begins to perceive itself as separate from the mother. Self-identity is thus dialectically determined by the relationship to something that is not-self, by the world beyond. But this distinction implies another. The self begins to say 'I' about itself. In this first manifestation of the doubling, the individual—to some extent—becomes an object of examination to itself. And this development continues. For example, the adult, according to some psychologists, typically sees himself as an outer, public, visible self as well as an inner, more or less secret—but also more authentic—self, observing and sometimes directing the outer self.

The form that this doubling assumes, however, does not depend only on the bio-psychological age of the individual; it is also culturally and historically determined. In *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (*The Civilizing Process*, 1977) Norbert Elias argues—on the basis of extensive French and German medieval source material—that the modern

individual grew out of a civilising process in which man's spontaneous bodily expression and behaviour were increasingly brought under conscious control. The turning point came with the court society and its demands for restraint and self control. This was where the seed of the bourgeois individual was sown. Elias developed his theories further in *Die höfische Gesellschaft* (*The Court Society*, 1969), describing the change of mentality that occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, with the court of Louis XIV as the prime example. The courtly individual's distance from nature, from other people and from himself was decisive in this development: 'Reflections intervene more or less automatically between the affective, spontaneous impulse to act and the actual performance of the action in word or deed' (Elias, 1983, p. 243).

Elias uses the metaphor of a spiral staircase to summarise this process, which he sees as four-dimensional:

A very apt metaphorical expression for what is observed here is the image of climbing or descending a staircase from one floor of a tower to the next. Reaching the higher floor, he not only has a different perspective of the country overlooked by the tower, but looking down he sees himself on the lower level from which he has come. This corresponds roughly to what can be observed in this earlier advancement of self-detachment: people are capable to a higher degree than before of observing themselves . . . (Elias, 1983, p. 245).

What has been described above as a naturally arising doubling of the self—part of the normal development of the individual—is presented by Elias as a model illustrating a social, psychological and historical development in the Renaissance of northwestern Europe. But the development does not end here. Elias goes on to say:

But they are not yet in a position to observe themselves as people observing themselves. This is only possible by climbing to the next plateau, to the next stage of self-detachment, that opens quite different perspectives to those of the preceding stage. This is the further climb that we are making at present from the advance in detachment of the Renaissance to observe ourselves (*ibid.*, pp. 245–246).

The basic doubling-of-the-self model itself undergoes a doubling in the historical perspective.

II LITERATURE AND DOUBLING

This article is not concerned with doubling in a broad sense, but rather with the form it takes in one particular area, namely that of literature. The choice to limit the field to literature is based on the view that literature, besides being part of the general history of self-reflexivity, represents a special form of it.

The themes of literature are stylised versions of fundamental experiences and cognitive patterns in the everyday life and habits of

human beings. This process of stylisation, or reflexivity—to use the concept in this context too—is the basis for the cultural and social functions of literature. One of literature's central concerns is precisely the processes by which meanings and interpretations emerge, change, become disputed or collapse. In this way literature offers a particularly rewarding approach to the confusing world of ideas and concepts once brought into the world by people and now surviving as habits and self-evident norms of behaviour, despite the fact that they are not naturally given. The illuminating structures artists have created, and continue to create in their works, make it possible for us to enter a world of ideas different from our own. Such a transcendent movement can lead us to discover why we think and behave as we do—and to find that in our apparently self-governed behaviour, there are forces and ideas at work that we do not control; that, quite to the contrary, control us.

The following argument is based on the proposition that what occurs in literary fiction is a doubling of the everyday doubling. Basic elements of literary form, most importantly story and metaphor, thus represent reflection on the spontaneous self-doubling behaviour of human beings.

The narrative impulse

The claim made in recent years that historians base their versions of history on literary patterns of narration—that they effectively create fiction—is really a case of turning things upside down. It is no coincidence that in some languages, including Danish, the colloquial word for 'story' and 'history' is the same. This is in part because the historian's and the literary writer's stories have a common source in everyday human behaviour. This viewpoint is presented by the philosopher of history David Carr in his book, *Time, Narrative, and History* (1991), in which he claims that 'narrative arises out of and is prefigured in certain figures of life, action, and communication' (Carr, 1991, p. 21). In recent years, the human sciences have increasingly accepted the theory that narration—storytelling—is one of the most important ways in which the human mind structures experience and knowledge of itself and the world. This is true of sociology, as we have seen in Giddens, and social psychology, as exemplified by Ziehe. In *Dynamisk utvecklingspsykologi* (Dynamic Development Psychology, 1998) Gunnar Carlberg—referring to D. N. Stern's *Diary of a Baby*, 1991—claims that:

The ability to tell one's story is linked to the development of object constancy and prior self-experience. . . . Narration . . . may very well turn out to be a universal human phenomenon which reflects the human psyche more than anything else (Carlberg, 1998, pp. 218–219).

Narration shapes, not only individual identity, but the everyday social life of humans. In their article 'Narrative thinking as a heuristic process', John A. Robinson and Linda Hawpe point out that the need to understand the actions of others requires a cognitive analysis of action in its

social context. And precisely such an analytical tool is offered by the categories and relations of narrative:

Stories seem to be the natural way to recount experience. We believe that this naturalness is an index of the success of narrative thinking in everyday life. Because we live in groups, we need ways of understanding the actions of others. This requires a cognitive analysis of action in its social context. The categories and relations which comprise narratives are the distillations of such an analysis and represent the properties of social action that are most useful in explaining everyday experience. In effect, narratives are a solution to a fundamental problem in life, viz. creating understandable order in human affairs (in Sarbin, 1986, p. 112).

The narrative shaping of experience is a heuristic process, and only through this process does the experience become true experience, i.e. something we can think about, recall and review. Thus the ordering, interpretive and social functions of narration are not determined by content alone, but also — and especially — by the narrative forms handed down within a given culture.

A corresponding view of the importance of narrative as a means of creating cultural cohesion is proposed by the cultural psychologist Jerome Bruner in *The Culture of Education* (1996):

There appear to be two broad ways in which human beings organize and manage their knowledge of the world, indeed structure even their immediate experience . . . These are conventionally known as logical-scientific thinking and narrative thinking . . . The importance of narrative for the cohesion of a culture is as great, very likely, as it is in structuring an individual life (Bruner, 1996, pp. 39–40).

A more radical version of this point of view is expressed by the cognitive scientist Mark Turner in his book *The Literary Mind*, 1996, to which we shall return. To him narrative is not a particularly literary form, but the fundamental form of human consciousness, on which all other mental functions are based. ‘Story is the basic principle of mind. Most of our experience, our knowledge, and our thinking is organised as stories’ (Turner, 1996, p. 1). And therefore ‘knowing how to inhabit stories is the essential requirement of mature life’ (ibid., p. 134).

Literary fiction

However, the wide use of the concept of narrative runs the risk of turning everything into narrative. It is therefore important in the present context to distinguish between narrative in the broad, anthropological sense and narrative as a category of literary fiction. While narrative in the broad, psycho- and socio-cultural sense is a means by which man achieves coherence and a sense of direction in his everyday life, individually and collectively, on the other hand, narrative understood as literary fiction, as a product of artistic imagination and stylisation,

represents a reflective doubling of this general and spontaneous activity. Literary fiction is willed, as Wolfgang Iser points out in *The Fictive and the Imaginary* (1993). Unlike other, non-literary forms of narrative, it always contains both an awareness of itself as fiction and a linguistic indication of this:

Fictionality also plays vital roles in the activities of cognition and behaviour, as in the founding of institutions, societies, and world pictures. Unlike such non-literary fictions, the literary text reveals its own fictionality. Because of this, its function must be radically different from that of related activities that mask their fictional nature (Iser, 1993, p. 12).

Iser's view supports the claim that literary fiction is characterised by (self)-reflexivity. And Iser, too, considers transcendence and doubling to be constituent features of fiction, as the following mosaic of quotations shows:

The act of fictionalizing is a crossing of boundaries . . . Fictionality offers an essential anthropological pattern for this overstepping; its doubling nature generates the condition of ecstasy . . . Rather than a state of performance or of relief, ecstasy involves a staging of what it is that, through repetition, realizes the possibility of becoming other. The doubling of fictionality may be conceived as a place of manifold mirrorings, in which everything is reflected, refracted, fragmented, telescoped, perspectivized, exposed, or revealed (ibid., pp. 78–79).

These manifold mirrorings imply a deliberate suspension of, or play with, the reference to reality in fiction. Literary fiction is not an alternative reality. But neither is literary fiction unreal in the sense of being unreal (still less a lie or a deceit), nor an illusion, even if it makes use of illusory effects. For the apparently unreal or illusory in fiction constitutes a literary sign language that addresses, influences and guides its reader and involves knowledge and interpretation of inner and outer realities of human life. Viewed in this perspective, literary fiction always has to do with people's ways of relating to reality.

Literary fiction is thus based on a conscious use of the spontaneous and — as such — subconscious forms of everyday awareness, and herein lies the primary source of its special reflective character. So rather than defining fiction by the opposition of real and unreal, it should perhaps be defined as a fundamental and flexible mental stance. Functionally, it corresponds to abstract thought, but it distinguishes itself from this form of thinking by being 'concrete thought', i.e. by concerning itself with actual, possible, and even impossible human acts and passions in an imaginative, illuminating way. Narrative fiction is thus located in an intermediate position between abstract thinking and a spontaneous, non-reflective, narrative, everyday state.

An example of this notion of mental stance or game-playing can be found in R. P. Blackmur's *Language as Gesture*:

Poetry is a game we play with reality; and it is the game and the play — the game by history and training, the play by instinct and need — which make it possible to catch hold of reality at all (Blackmur, 1952, p. 423).

Literary fiction never unfolds in an arbitrary space; it is determined by the historical reality of both author and reader, by their socialisation, their elementary physical and psychological constitution and needs. It therefore always implies an exchange with what is, and this exchange in turn affects the participant in the fictional game. The game thus takes place within a reality, it relates to a reality, and it involves a reality. Precisely because it is not reality, but a changeable, flexible mental stance, it is able to serve the constant human need to relate to reality — which in its turn is neither static nor well-defined.

When discussing reality in relationship to literary fiction, we are not dealing with something pre-existing that is captured. The situation is rather that reality only becomes understandable, as literature, through the fictional game. In this game, the everyday, non-fictive narratives that spontaneously structure our lives assume a reflective, illuminating form that allows us to view the immediate at a distance. Literary fiction is a way of viewing or imagining things that enables man — through this imaginary game or thought experiment — to place himself at a distance from reality in order to catch hold of it: 'Creation of distance could well be assumed to be the most general aim of imaginary activity' (Pavel, 1986, p. 145). The idea that through literary fiction we can transcend our previous understanding must be seen in this light.

Robinson and Hawpe speak of the everyday narrative as being analytical. It is this kind of spontaneous, non-reflective analysis — the elementary, culturally instituted categorisation of experience — that in literary fiction undergoes reflective doubling. And this gives literary fiction its special, non-abstract, analytical character — its intermediate position between the imaginary and the real. In the words of Karel Kosík in *Dialektik des Konkreten*:

Every work of art, while existing as an indivisible whole, possesses a double nature: it is a representation of reality, but it also constructs a reality that does not exist alongside the work or prior to it, but only in the work itself (Kosík, 1967, p. 123, my translation).

III GENRE AND TRANSCENDENCE

Narrative

As an approach to examining the *Bildung* potential of literature, one could consider the literary forms of doubling as sophisticated, cultural articulations of the elementary cognitive patterns operative at all levels and stages of human life. Even in the earliest phases of childhood these patterns reveal themselves in (some of) the ways in which the child attempts to organise its mind.

In his now famous 1953 article entitled 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena', D. W. Winnicott describes how the child's ability to symbolise is developed at the stage when the child begins to distinguish itself and its inner world from the mother and gradually discovers the external world as something external. What Winnicott calls 'transitional phenomena' and 'transitional objects' occur during this phase, as part of a sequence of events that:

starts with the newborn infant's fist-in-mouth activities, and leads eventually on to an attachment to a teddy, a doll or soft toy, or to a hard toy . . . I have introduced the terms 'transitional objects' and 'transitional phenomena' for designation of the intermediate area of experience, between the thumb and the teddy-bear, between the oral eroticism and the true object-relationship, between primary creative activity and projection of what has already been introjected, between primary unawareness of indebtedness and the acknowledgement of indebtedness (say: 'ta') (Winnicott, 1982, p. 2).

The important point in connection with literary fiction is that these phenomena and objects possess a double nature. On the one hand, the teddy bear, for example, is a substitute for something that has been lost, while on the other — as a representation of the lost object — it is a fruit of the separation: 'The object represents the infant's transition from a state of being merged with the mother to a state of being in relation to the mother as something outside and separate' (*ibid.*, p. 17).

In my view, this double quality of absence and presence, of the imagined and the real, of wish and actual fact, constitutes a sort of middle position between inner and outer reality that bears a strong resemblance to fictional literature's relation to reality, as outlined above. To Winnicott this intermediate territory is the origin of 'play, and of artistic creativity and appreciation, and of religious feeling, and of dreaming, and also of fetishism, lying and stealing . . .' (*ibid.*, p. 6). As I see it, it is in this fluid state of both-and and neither-nor that one must look for the psychological basis for the meaning-making dialectics of different interpretive positions — a process that literary fiction makes use of by doubling it. Wordsworth's cuckoo is a veritable transitional phenomenon, in Winnicott's sense.

This view finds support in other psychological observations and theories. In the article 'Children's fiction making', Brian Sutton-Smith proposes that the child's ability to understand and use narrative as a medium is developed in the 'face games' the infant plays with its parents. 'The parent-child-play quadrologue establishes the social scaffolding for later expressive performances. This is the most probable source of both later symbolic play . . . and later story telling' (in Sarbin, 1986, p. 70).

The role of such early, spontaneous and pre-literary processes as precursors of later literary activity is the main theme of Howard Gardner's *The Unschooled Mind*, 1991. Gardner describes how children

construct 'scenarios' that—to begin with—consist of a simple structuring of recurring events:

As early as at fourteen months of age children are capable of pointing out which objects belong with which regularly recurring activities, such as getting dressed in the morning, or getting ready to go out. Soon this knowledge of scenarios becomes fused with linguistic competence. At the age of two or three, a child is capable of describing scenario-like events—the kind that occur in their own life, and the kind they hear about . . . These scenarios serve as the basis for telling and understanding stories, just as they enable children to understand and tell what has happened to them in their own lives.²

These scenarios, or elementary stories, function as a sort of basic cognitive model, and they play an important role in the structuring of the child's gradually acquired knowledge of the world and itself. Identity development and narrative are thus inextricably linked; one might even claim that in Gardner's child-scenarios we have early examples of the continued telling of the life story that, according to Giddens, is a basic characteristic of identity formation in the post-traditional world.

If it is true that narrative in the broad sense of the concept serves such identity-shaping functions, it is tempting to propose that the mastery of different narrative forms and viewpoints is also of decisive importance in identity formation and development. This thesis finds support in, for example, A. O. Appleyard's book *Becoming a Reader* (1992), in which he describes the main phases in the literary reader's development. Appleyard points to the decisive cognitive change that occurs in the child's perception of itself and the world when it becomes capable of organising its world, not just spatially but also temporally, through narration, and also when it transcends its egocentric mode of narration by putting itself in the reader's place. Both are examples of elementary forms of self-transcendence, of self-reflexivity. In Appleyard's view, the fictive universe is something other and more than a mental storehouse:

This invented universe is not just a storehouse of accumulated data and signs available for use by our developing consciousness, it is more like a matrix that provides the structures in which our consciousness matures (Appleyard, 1992, p. 13).

In this sense, narrative form—understood dynamically, generatively—is the primary shaping force. The genre is not just the result of a conscious process; it is in itself a means of forming and expanding consciousness. As a 'primal cognitive genre', narrative is thus an important constituent factor in the developmental process. It is characteristic of this primal genre that it is verbalised at an early stage of human development, that it has an elementary spatial and temporal structure, and that—as narrative competence and narrative viewpoints are developed—it makes self-transcendence at different levels possible. All of these characteristics are of decisive importance in the shaping of human

identity, but the latter—conscious transcendence of the self—is the dynamic, common denominator. For self-transcendence is not a one-time occurrence. It is productive, cumulative. It enables the individual to mentally become master of himself or herself and the surrounding world and to develop this reflective activity further.

It is precisely this self-transcendent capacity that literary fiction can help to form and qualify in significant ways through the dialectics generated by the reader's encounter with the text—by the reader's expectations and the answers offered by the text:

The text is a system of response-inviting structures that the author has organized by reference to a repertory of social and literary codes shared by author and reader . . . reader and text interact in a feedback loop. The reader brings expectations derived from literary and life experience to bear on the text, and the text feeds back these expectations or it does not (*ibid.*, pp. 9–10).

Metaphor

Something similar is true of the other basic element of literary form: metaphor. The use of metaphor is rooted in our everyday consciousness, our everyday language. In George Lakoff's formulation 'metaphor (that is, cross-domain mapping) is absolutely central to ordinary natural language semantics, and . . . the study of literary metaphor is an extension of the study of everyday metaphor.'

Metaphor—like narrative—is also a basic cognitive form, in turn related to doubling. Jonathan Culler expresses this clearly and simply: 'Metaphor is . . . a basic way of knowing. We know something by seeing it as something' (Culler, 1997, p. 72).

The use of metaphor also seems to further the kind of transcendent understanding that we see in elementary, everyday narration. In their article 'Metaphor and learning' (in Ortony, 1993), Hugh G. Petrie and Rebecca S. Oshlag make the following claim: 'It is our thesis that metaphor is one of the central ways of leaping the epistemological chasm between old knowledge and radically new knowledge' (*ibid.*, p. 583). A corresponding line of thought, but based on specifically literary premises, is expressed by Atle Kittang in his article 'Historical or aesthetic or both?', in which he evaluates the state of literary study after the rhetorical or linguistic turn. Kittang describes two possible approaches to literature—historical and aesthetic-ontological—arguing that future literary study must choose between these:

A new historicism in the study of the literary will have to include consideration of its metahistorical basis, which, among other things, will lead to a greater emphasis on analytical reading of the texts one wishes to link together in contextual wholes . . . The crucial question here is obviously whether the specific functions of literature are subject to historical change . . . or whether literature at all times has represented a unique and essential mode (Kittang, 1998, p. 25, my translation).

Kittang opts for the latter. In the second half of his article he attempts to define literary fiction's distinctive mode by comparing it to literary metaphor — in line with Maurice-Jean Lefebvre's *L'Image fascinante et le surréel* (1965). He links metaphor to man's break with the natural and the resultant doubling, reaching the following important conclusion:

As a doubling of itself—as sensually present and at the same time detaching itself from the sensual—figuration, trope, idiom, escape from the given, forms the basis for metaphorical thinking and is the true expression of man's 'nature, which is to escape from the natural' (Kittang, 1998, p. 25).

Parable

This brief outline of the function of metaphor suggests that it is essentially characterised by the same doubling and transcendence that we find in narrative fiction. One might even claim, with Giambattista Vico, that metaphor is in fact a miniature fable and that narration and metaphor, the two basic elements of literary form, are manifestations of the same elementary cognitive behaviour, dictated by the need to 'scan' reality.

This claim finds support in *The Literary Mind* (1996), referred to above, in which Mark Turner discusses the doubling, transcendent character of fiction and the resultant generation of meaning from an overarching point of view. He is concerned with an elementary cognitive 'grammar', whose everyday forms are the same as those found in literature. 'The everyday mind is essentially literary' (Kittang, 1998, p. 25). According to Turner, the mental processes we consider literary do not derive from everyday mental processes, as the present article has suggested so far. Rather, the case is the exact reverse:

The processes of the literary mind are usually considered to be different from and secondary to the processes of the everyday mind. On that assumption, the everyday mind—with its stable concepts and literal meaning—provides the beginnings for the (optional) literary mind. On the contrary, processes that we have always considered to be literary are at the foundation of the everyday mind. Literary processes like blending make the everyday mind possible (Turner, 1996, p. 115).³

This cognitive grammar rests on parable. In the human mind, one elementary story is projected onto—or literally placed in parallel to—one or more other narratives. We understand one story by virtue of another. And we understand ourselves through parable.

Story is the basic principle of mind. Most of our experience, our knowledge, and our thinking is organised as stories. The mental scope of story is magnified by *projection*—one story makes sense of another. The projection of one story onto another is *parable*, a basic cognitive principle that shows up everywhere, from simple actions like telling the time to complex literary creations . . . We interpret every level of our experience by means of parable (ibid., p. 1).

The parabolic coupling of different stories and associated categories or mental spaces generates new meaning:

We typically conceive of concepts as packets of meaning. We give them labels: marriage, birth, death, force, electricity, time, tomorrow. Meaning seems local and stable But parable gives us a different view of meaning as arising from connections across more than one mental space. Meaning is not a deposit in a concept-container. It is alive and active, dynamic and distributed, constructed for local purposes of knowing and acting. Meanings are not mental objects bounded in conceptual spaces but rather complex operations of projection, binding, linking, blending, and integration over multiple spaces. Meaning is parabolic and literary (ibid., p. 57).

Meaning does not arise out of the blue, but always as a change of, or cross between, already existing meanings. In the parabolic exchange or doubling, transcendence of meaning takes place, generating new meaning. What is true of narrative is also true of metaphor that—in extension of Vico and Turner's argument—can be seen as a highly concentrated, parabolic, meaning-making form.

Viewed in a psycho-archaeological perspective, this process could be explained with reference to Winnicott's theory of transitional phenomena. For in these, we find a basic, dynamic-transcendent form operative in the dialectical relationship between the familiar and the unknown that is a precondition for all meaning-making. This elementary, fluid, intermediate position is also the source of the meaning-making that takes place in literary doubling—the reflective activity through which everyday experience and its spontaneous, cognitive forms become both visible and transparent.

IV *BILDUNG*, LITERATURE, EDUCATION

The expanded concept of experience

Every educational process is conditioned by the fact that we have already been formed by the culture we inhabit. And this culture is itself the result of a comprehensive formative process. Our habitual—and in this sense subconscious, non-reflective—behaviour is the result of a process in which the experience of many generations has established a general practice and a set of norms that seem natural. Man's forming of himself within culture thus creates a second nature.

An important task in modern *Bildung* theory is to see this second nature for what it is: the internalisation of accumulated collective experience. In extension of both Wordsworth's genealogical turn and Gadamer's interpretation of Hegel, one might employ an expanded concept of experience. When we, for example, observe phenomena in the world around us, we are not merely perceiving them. The retina is, in this respect, not a *tabula rasa*. For, as Arthur Arnheim has convincingly argued, perception is a form of thought. 'Visual perception is visual

thinking' (Arnheim, 1969, p. 14). We perceive in ways encoded into us by our culture. The form our experience assumes is an integral part of it. In principle this corresponds to Robinson and Hawpe's argument that narrative form constitutes experience as experience.

What these views have in common is the apparent paradox that since we ourselves—and the language we use—are social and cultural creations, we experience more than we know. This implies an obligation for all types of education to provide access to this latent experience and consequently to operate with an expanded concept of experience much akin to Wordsworth's.

It is precisely in relation to this transcendent movement that literature has a special role to play in education. As the present article has argued, this is because literature springs from conscious awareness of the spontaneous and habitual ways in which man organises, expresses and interprets himself and his world. Literary fiction is a reflective, stylised version of elementary cognitive forms—at once an effect and a conscious expression of the doubling of the self. But in any given literary work this doubling is formed and interpreted within a specific cultural context.

In this connection it is important to repeat and emphasise that the reflective element in literary fiction is the result of reflection understood, not as abstract thinking, but as a way of creating an imaginative distance to reality that makes it possible to get hold of and interpret reality, while at the same time making it impossible to think—or narrate—it away.

The subject of literary study thus comes to include not only historically and culturally determined literary forms of expression and consciousness, but also the analytical and reflective activity of readers as they work with and become engaged in the literary text. This double approach enables the reader to form a reflective understanding of the self and the contemporary world. But this kind of understanding will also be aware of itself as being formed and conditioned—that is, it will be an historical understanding in the truest sense: a self-transcending conscious process. When educational practice is based on these processes, the understanding of difficult, strange or even repellent older texts of any given culture offers a hermeneutic paradigm for the understanding of contemporary forms of culture different from one's own. In this way the teaching of literature can help to develop tools and mental approaches needed to counteract the tendency to reject or persecute views and behaviour that one fails to understand simply because they are different and alien. Providing such an approach to understanding is—or should be—at the core of modern education.

Bildung and the teaching of literature

Let me therefore—in line with the views expressed here—conclude by suggesting what the teaching and understanding of literature have to offer in relation to contemporary *Bildung*.

What modern literary theorists—Umberto Eco and others—have characterised as the ‘open’ text should not be understood as a text that can mean anything. When the older Eco speaks of ‘the limits of interpretation’ it is not to deny the basic human impulse to continually ascribe meaning to the world. Rather, it is to point out that meaning only exists because of limits, because of differences. While the generation of meaning and understanding is always open in the sense of being a process, it is never open in the sense of being without contour.

All literary, fictive texts take part in this process. As previously argued, they do not only represent and generate meaning, they also relate concretely to the generation of meaning as a process. They do so in two dialectically related ways. First of all, serious literary texts are characterised by awareness of the fact that new meaning involves already existing meaning. For example: all great cultural myths of the Greek, Jewish, Christian and Islamic tradition—and most of the works we call the classics—are concerned with norm-breaking, conflicts of interpretation, and changes in meaning. Second, the articulation of conflict and change in these texts is based on a profound need to examine the basic nature of these interpretational shifts—including their causes and effects—and to express them in a clear and recognisable form.

Viewed in this way, the openness of literature lies in its ability to awaken in the reader’s mind the dialectics of the relationship between the known and the unknown, the familiar and the alien. In this fundamental hermeneutic function lies the socio-cultural and psychological basis of literature: its ritual function, one might say.

Thus the special openness of literature is found, not in the text itself in any banal sense, but in the field of exchange between text and reader. This openness is necessary for literature to function as the eye of the storm, so to speak, as a place where the reader can temporarily be taken out of the confusion and chaos of reality and—in a concentrated, illuminating and compelling way—be confronted with some of the forces and laws governing human behaviour and perception. When the reading ends, the reader can return to his own, actual reality and look at it with new eyes, or from a perspective different from the one he abandoned when he surrendered himself to the fictive world.

The ancients described the opposite poles of this process as ecstasy and catharsis. One might also call it the pulsating movement of literature’s contraction and expansion of consciousness. On the one hand, literature is a conscious distillation of something infinitely more complex than the stories and images it presents to or evokes in its readers or listeners. On the other hand, and precisely because of its stylised forms, literature allows the unfolding of mental activity during the reading process; the reader quite literally attaches meaning to the text under the influence of its content and form.

This rhythmic alternation between closure and openness, between engagement/absorption and distance/meditation, is the source of literature’s power to fascinate, and of its reflective potential. That literature

is open means that it allows the reader, in the process of appropriation, to get hold of the concepts inherent in the text as well as the — hitherto naturalised — concepts he or she brings to it. The codes and conventions that underlie all spontaneous and subconscious meaning-making become visible. In this kind of reading process, the openness means, not that an infinite number of equivalent meanings are set free, but that a transcendence of consciousness can take place, that the reader can become aware of the codes imbedded both in the text and in himself. The openness entails a sorting out and hierarchical ordering of actual and potential meanings and consequently implies choice. Thus literature is not formless, but dynamic form.

Precisely because literary fiction possesses these qualities, working with literary texts becomes both a self-reflective activity and source of insight into the history and changing forms of (self)reflection — and thus a means of personal and cultural self-understanding. This is especially relevant in our so-called late or postmodern complex society. For working with literature, which involves identifying and getting to know different forms and strategies of understanding, may serve to prevent the much-talked-about postmodern complexity from being viewed as something uniquely new — or as a self-evident fact — and instead expose it to critical examination and an historical perspective. Herein lies the challenge to a modern teaching of literature, as well as its educational obligation.

In my view, it is indisputable that *Bildung* takes place. The question is whether we are at all able to influence these developmental processes through education, or whether they have in reality been handed over for ever out to the media and the market. I prefer to believe that it is possible for us to influence the *Bildung* processes — and that such naïvety, despite the disappointments that may result from it, is preferable to a defeatism that consolidates the monopolising tendencies threatening true *Bildung*.

Whether or not one suspects that the frequent reference to the late or postmodern world (and globalisation) is merely the ‘grand narrative’ of the intellectual élite of a new era, one cannot ignore the fact that the cultures of Western Europe, North America and large parts of the rest of the world, seem more complex and less monolithic than at any previous time in history. One should not, however, make the mistake of viewing cultural complexity as something new in itself. The syncretistic melting pot of Hellenism is just one example to the contrary among many. What is new is rather the forms the complexity has assumed. Since the Second World War, cultural multiplicity has moved so far into the foreground, especially in the Western world, that the old monocultural narrative cannot be sustained.

This seems both troubling and extremely confusing to many. But at the same time it is hard not to see this change as potentially liberating and offering new possibilities. For it shows that the forms and mental strategies of literary fiction are dynamic and transcendent, self-reflexive and parabolic, and have always been so — even during the periods when an élite was using literature to legitimise its own power. The capabilities

that working with literature can help to develop are not limited to the field of literature, but involve man as an understanding and interpreting being. Precisely because transcendence is at the very heart of literary fiction, in all its diverse forms, it provides a space where people can relate, not just to themselves and their given culture, but to the larger cultural dialectics and the way in which human beings in general perceive themselves and their world. Due to its reflective character, literature offers a way of seeing oneself from the outside as an individual and a social being: seeing oneself from a changed position where all that was once taken for granted is no longer unconditionally true.

A method of teaching literature that makes use of the qualities in literary fiction described in these pages might help to educate both students and their teachers as thinking beings and thereby further a cultural understanding that is not self-sufficient and limited, but views each individual culture in a relative perspective and places on its agenda the interaction of different cultures and different paradigms or ways of understanding: just as literature of lasting value has always done.

In the peculiar world we inhabit, things have now gone so far that powerful organisations representing gigantic economic interests can patent human genes, even though these belong to all of us and therefore to no one. But at least the world has not — yet — become so absurd that any one nation has a patent on Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kierkegaard — or Wordsworth's cuckoo.

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Correspondence: Klaus Peter Mortensen, Frederiksberg Allé 80, 4, DK-1820 Frederiksberg C, Denmark. Email: kpm@dsl.dk

NOTES

1. Margaret Donaldson summarises recent research in this field, suggesting that 'some sense of self comes very early' (Donaldson, 1992, p. 36); 'the sense of a differentiated and enduring self might in principle precede any conviction about enduring things in the world beyond'. However, the child's identity at this early stage is not temporal, i.e. not linked to memory. Furthermore, 'whatever is the immediate focus of concern is experienced by the baby as a kind of total immersion in a way that admits no separation of percepts, thoughts, feelings, and actions. These are intertwined . . . so that the whole of the personal life is unified, immediate, spontaneous' (ibid., pp. 48–49).
2. Quotation translated from the Norwegian version: *Slik tenker og lærer barn — og slik bør lærere undervise*, 1993, pp. 76–77.
3. Ibid., p. 115. Turner's thought-provoking reversal seems an anachronistic appliance of a modern literary term to the development of consciousness in both the ontogenetic and phylogenetic sense; or, a metaphoric expansion of the concept of 'literary' which threatens to render it meaningless. I prefer to define this relationship on the basis of a more narrow use of the word 'literary' — in line with the arguments presented in the previous pages.

