

# Mindre bidrag

## Downward Mobility: Structure of Individual Search in *Marie Grubbe* and *Anna (jeg) Anna*

The protagonists of J. P. Jacobsen's *Marie Grubbe* and Klaus Rifbjerg's *Anna (jeg) Anna*, although separated in time by nearly three hundred years, embark on individual quests for meaning and value which take them with dizzying speed from social obscurity to social success and then plunge them down violently in a process that could best be likened to an inverse *bildungsroman* – in short, every social climber's nightmare. These downward moves are marked by exceptional violence and self-destructive actions. For Marie and Anna, however, the plunge to the lowest social classes is constructive. The downward social movements bestow meaning and value unto their lives. Through their rejection of male-dominated modes of self-identification both of these women are able to discover a self, centered relative to themselves. By the conclusion of their journeys, the first decidedly diachronic and the second synchronic, Marie and Anna no longer seek validation from the paternalistic societal construct. Their marginality, so apparent at the beginning of both works, becomes a non-viable concept by the time they come into their 'self's.

Michel Foucault (1969:12-13 and 1980) has observed that despite the removal of power structures by revolutionary change, these very same power structures are able to reestablish themselves after that change. It is this rather negative valuation of historical development that allows for the linkage between Marie and Anna's quests. Despite the deep-seated changes in the overt make-up of society, the implicit power structures, in this case the paternal order, remain the same. Nevertheless, Anna and Marie, through their rejection of these power structures, are able to undergo positive individual change. It is against this framework of societal stagnation that Anna and Marie play out their journeys. Lucien Goldman's reevaluation of Georg Lukacs' (1936-1937) model of the historical novel in the context of the realistic and sociological novel is applicable. In his work, Goldman (1964:2-4) posits that these types of novels illustrate the quest for value of a problematic hero in a degraded world. That Anna and Marie are women immediately problematizes their role as hero since they are embedded in a male-dominated society. Because of the societal orientation, Anna and Marie at the outset of each work are forced to receive their identity from the men with whom they associate. Also, the worlds in which they act are degraded and devoid of values – Marie lives amidst royal debauchery while Anna lives in diplomatic splendor surrounded by indigenous slaves. It is their respective search for values and definition that highlights the degenerate nature of the male-dominated society. Marie's quest is based primarily on the opposition of civilization and nature. Instead of attempting to tame nature, which is the main goal of civilization, Marie decides to follow it. Through this process, she is able to develop her self identity. Anna's quest is based primarily on the opposition of the super-ego and the id. Instead of giving in to the

dominating concerns of societal oppression, Anna decides to follow her impulses. Through this process, she is able to reestablish a balanced self identity, with neither the super-ego nor the id playing the dominant role.

The two authors, Jacobsen and Riffbjerg, select female protagonists to take this journey because of the marginal nature of women in society. In each case, women find themselves in a male-dominated arena, acting more as an appendage to a man than as a complete human being. Position in society is often defined according to the role played in production. Women's role in production in both these works is decidedly domestic. Because their role is limited, they are forced to be marginal characters. When the marginal role is rejected, the woman hero becomes, in the eyes of her society, problematic. By focusing on these problematic women heroes, Jacobsen and Riffbjerg force a recentering, thereby mirroring the actions of their protagonists. Marie and Anna break with the center (male-dominated society and its accordant power structures) and move towards seizing identity and definition. The violence of this recentering is reflected again and again in the fulfillment of their individual quests.

The downward progress of the quest also relies on the female identity of the protagonists. The violence associated with the recentering process is primarily expressed in the realm of male/female relationships and sexuality. Sigmund Freud (1919) views female sexuality as ultimately masochistic. It is this patristic view of female sexuality that informs both these works. The downward mobility of the protagonists is expressed in self-destructive acts. Through self-destruction, the protagonists begin to gain identity. The need to remove themselves from the male dominant mode of identification leads the protagonist into this self-destructive and masochistic quest. Both male authors have structured the female quest as one of constructive self-destruction, implicitly asserting the masochistic nature of male-dominated female sexuality. Interestingly, the self-destructive acts cease when the female protagonist successfully defines herself on her own terms.

The seemingly masochistic aspects of Marie's character have been considered in earlier studies, primarily as reflections on the author or nineteenth century bourgeois society. In his dissertation, Frederik Nielsen (1953:244) maintains that Marie is a muse for Jacobsen's algolagnic tendencies. In Nielsen's (1953:228) view:

Marie's ydmygelser ikke skyldes hendes egen søgen efter lyst i nedværdigelse. Derimod har vi lov til at fastslå, at en forfatter, der oplever Marie's ydmygelser og skriver dem ned på papiret, kan føle lyst både i oplevelsen, i nedskrivningen og i den senere gennemlæsning.

Marie's humiliations are not caused by her own quest for lust in degradation. On the contrary, we can maintain that an author, who experiences Marie's humiliations and writes them down on paper, can feel lust both in the experience, the writing and in the later rereading.

Jørgen Holmgaard (1976) reconsidered Nielsen's evaluation of both Jacobsen and Marie in a sociologically based study of Jacobsen's works. Holmgaard (1976:131) evaluates Marie's destruction and masochism as an expression of a general sociological construct prevalent in the bourgeois society of nineteenth

century Denmark projected back in time, rather than the highly personal expression of Jacobsen's own sado-masochism. In both studies, Marie's masochism is considered primarily in relation to Jacobsen or his social-historical situation. Although both analyses provide valuable insight into Jacobsen and his works, they neglect the underlying emancipatory function of Marie's actions, as she attains her own identity by gradually, albeit violently, shedding the identities others have imposed on her. This emancipatory aspect of the masochistic is found again in Rifbjerg's *Anna (jeg) Anna*.

The degraded world, according to Goldman, is one without values. Actions and statements in both *Marie Grubbe* and *Anna (jeg) Anna* provide clear evidence of the degraded condition of the world and society. Marie's early years are set against a backdrop of war and royal debauchery. Ulrik Christian's hypocrisy and self-indulgence perhaps best exemplify the moral decay of Marie's world. Ulrik Frederik, Sti Høgh, Palle Dyre, Erik and Rigitze Grubbe, the archetypal evil step-mother and a host of other characters all reflect and endorse the hypocrisy, greed, lust and dishonesty of a devalued society. Anna, as well, finds herself in a world "hvør alle værdier er opløst" [where all values have dissolved] (Rifbjerg 147). The sexual aggression and violence visited on Anna's body by a procession of male characters helps to highlight the low esteem in which the society holds women and the general void of values. The male characters, both as part of and perpetrators of the degraded society, are to a great extent excluded from the positive potentialities implicit in the recentering process. Only the truly marginal characters – the disenfranchised women – are able to begin the positive move of breaking with societal modes of definition.

Marie's quest is essentially diachronic, stretching the length of her entire life. In her early adolescence, Marie is quickly swept up into the world of the court and the lifestyle of courtly women, beginning to take after her aunt Rigitze the more time she spends in her sphere of influence. However, she is able to maintain a critical distance, and does not accept as a *fait accompli* the male domination of her life, asking: "Hvad [er] der egentlig til at glæde sig til her i Verden?" [What is there after all to look forward to here in the world?] (Jacobsen 31). Her first attempt at love, with the debauched Ulrik Christian, ends in absolute rejection. Soon she finds herself involved with Ulrik Frederik whose attitude towards Marie reflects his view of her as a mere possession: "[hun] var given ham i Vold som en død Mands Sjæl Vorherre, til at træde i Støvet om han vilde, til at opløfte naar han vilde, til at ydmyge, til at bøje" [she was put into his power like the soul of a dead man is to God, to tramp into the dust if he wanted to, to raise up when he wanted, to humiliate, to bend] (Jacobsen 123). Marie is to be treated as an object – a person without identity. The marriage is no happier than can be expected, since Marie rejects the marginal role that Ulrik Frederik presses on her. Marie feels robbed of her humanity, much like a prisoner: "I slige Dage følte hun sig som en Fange" [On such days she felt like a prisoner] (Jacobsen 147). It is not until Ulrik Frederik returns from a long trip abroad that Marie truly awakens to her situation and forcibly begins the elimination of male definition in favor of a self defined identity: "Næste Dags Morgen vaagnede Marie længe før Ulrik Frederik. Det var næsten med Had,

hun betragtede den sovende Skikkelse ved hendes Side" [The next morning Marie awoke long before Ulrik Frederik. It was almost with hate that she watched the sleeping shape by her side] (Jacobsen 153). The first steps away from Ulrik Frederik's domination come from an inexplicable urge to attack him: "det kom saadan paa mig, der var det, der tvang mig ..." [it just came over me, there was something which compelled me ...] (Jacobsen 158).

Rifbjerg presents a striking parallel to this scene as a means for kicking off Anna's quest as well. Waking one morning, Anna reflects on the man lying beside her, the man who completely dominates her identity: "Nu. Nøjagtig. To dage senere. Ligger jeg her. Jeg ser på dig ... Men jeg vækker dig ikke, og jeg går heller ikke amok" [Now. Exactly. Two days later. I lie here. I look at you ... But I don't wake you nor do I run amuck] (Rifbjerg 17). Anna, rather than attacking her husband as Marie does, is plagued by an inexplicable desire, a need, a *ivang*, to stab her youngest daughter Minna with a knife: "Jeg vågner for tidligt hver morgen ... og ved, at om et minut, om et sekund, om en lille brøkdæl af et tidsforløb går jeg ind til Minna med din lommekniv og støder den i hende til hun ikke lever længere" [I wake up too early every morning ... and know, that in a minute, in a second, in a tiny little fraction of a moment I will go in to Minna with your pocket knife and thrust it into her until she no longer is living] (Rifbjerg 12). Minna represents Tom's definition of Anna, and thus acts as a part of Anna – a "mini Anna" (Rifbjerg 250). The desire to kill Minna reflects Anna's desire to eliminate that aspect of herself which is dominated and defined by Tom.

Marie's rejection of the multiple overlays of male-dominance (her father, Ulrik Frederik and court life) is expressed in a series of downward social movements, each movement providing her with more and more freedom to determine her own life and thus her identity. These movements are consciously made and represent Marie's rejection of societal norms of conduct. Like a Kierkegaardian aesthetic, Marie first flees south to France with Sti Høgh: "saa er Marie nærmere at ligne ved et Dyr, der har revet sig løs og flygter i ustandset Flugt, ... drevet fremad og fremad, i vanvittig Frygt, af Lænken, der klirrende slæber i dets Spor" [And so Marie is more like an animal which has torn itself loose and flees in unhindered flight ... driven forward and forward, in insane fright of the chain which it drags clanking in its tracks] (Jacobsen 238). She revels in her money and the pleasure it can buy her, but soon discovers it does not help her on the road to self determination: "Hun øste ud af sit Guld med fulde Hænder ... men det var Alt forgæves. Der var ingen Ende paa hendes Elenighed" [She ladled her gold out with full hands ... but it was all in vain. There was no end to her misery] (Jacobsen 238). Leaving France, Marie returns north to Denmark and her father's farm.

Marie does not resign herself to her father's domination, expressed in her marriage to Palle Dyre, but rather continues, albeit slowly, on her path towards self definition. Her liaison with Søren, the young farm hand, is perhaps the most violent of her downward moves. At the same time, it is the most successful move in helping her establish a self. Søren represents a break with earlier values and power structures while, at the same time, allows Marie control over a relationship. As such, this relationship marks the first successful triumph of

nature over the constraints of civilization. Because Marie defines the relationship and because Søren is the first person to express a true commitment, it is not surprising that Marie accepts his beatings: “om han end tidt drak sig fuld og slog hende, saa gjorde det ikke saa meget; Marie vidste jo, at det var Hverdagsbrug i det Samfundslag, i hvilket hun havde ladet sig indskrive, og blev hun en enkelt Gang utaalmodig, saa stillede hun snart tilfreds naar hun kom til at tænke paa, at den Søren ... var den Samme, der engang havde skudt et Menneske for hendes Skyld” [if he once in a while got drunk and hit her, it did not matter that much; Marie knew that this was an everyday occurrence in that social class she had entered, and if she got impatient, she would soon content herself when she remembered that this Søren ... was the same one who had once shot a person for her sake] (Jacobsen 300). For Marie, the beatings are more an expression of the natural process than the civilizing process. Once nature has been allowed to come into full fruition and civilization has been tamed, her quest is complete and her self-destructive acts come to an end. In her conversations with the visiting Ludvig Holberg, she expresses the belief that “hvert Menneske lever sit eget Liv og dør sin egen Død” [each person lives their own life and dies their own death] (Jacobsen 306), an impossible belief if she were still under the influence of male power structures. Marie has been able to find self definition and value through the rejection of societal constructs. Her quest takes a lifetime.

In contrast, Anna's quest takes no more than three or four weeks. Hers is not a quest through time, but one through space, marked by extreme violence as she discards her earlier social fetters and returns as a newly re-centered Anna to her class origins on Nørrebro. Her marriage to Tom, whose name literally means “empty”, is the picture of social success – a young girl of working class background rises to the heights of the diplomatic corps through marriage. The only hole in the fabric of the marriage is Anna's overwhelming desire to kill her daughter. Through the process of marriage and upward social moves, Anna has split into two halves – Anna, the person willing to submit to and actively re-enforce the male power structures, and *jeg*, who desperately seeks definition and value by undertaking more and more impulsive and (self) destructive acts. The quest takes her through a process of reintegrating these two parts into one Anna who is both self-defined and able to accept her relations to others. The liaison with Jørgen Schwer, whose name suggests “difficult”, offers a striking parallel to Marie's relationship with Søren. Jørgen, like Søren, has effectively rejected the social order, but he finds himself strangely drawn back to the very same society that wishes to imprison him, just as Søren himself is drawn to the job of executioner.

The first move for Anna is a break with her husband's milieu, represented by Tom, the police detective Kristensen, and her brother-in-law, Morten. In so doing, Anna rejects the oppression accordant to being Tom's wife. She allies herself with Jørgen, forcing him out of the comfortable role of prisoner, much as Marie forces Søren out of the comfortable role as farm hand. In both cases, the women force the men to become slightly homicidal, an expression of the protagonists' new found positions of control. Anna's quest, like Marie's, revolves around redefining relationships, particularly those with men, with an eye

towards establishing a non-threatening interaction, with both parties on equal societal footing.

The relationship between Anna and Schwer is the most important relationship in Anna's process of redefining her self. Her first attraction to Schwer is based on a fascination with the rebel – someone without *fornuft* and without a bit of *pæn* to his credit. Schwer rebels against the system, and this attracts her to him. However, she can not truly accept a relationship with him unless it is at first non-sexual. Sexual relationships with men have for Anna always been on the terms of the male – they have been hierarchical relationships where she has been subjugated by the masculine. Although Schwer carries a very large gun, an obvious allusion to rampant masculinity, Anna is able to deprive him of its use: “... samler al min opmærksomme energi i højre ben, som under det rigtige tryk, frigivet ... [kan] standse en Sherman Tank. Han står over mig og jeg slipper bremsen. I sin naturlige reaktion krummer Jørgen Schwer sig sammen, slipper krampagtigt pistolen, og tumler ...” [gather all my conscious energy in the right leg, which, under the correct pressure, released ... can stop a Sherman Tank. [Another symbol of excessive masculinity]. He stands over me and I release the brake. In his natural reaction, Jørgen Schwer doubles up, convulsively drops the pistol, and falls ...] (Rifbjerg 95). With the emasculation of Schwer, Anna is able to begin a relationship defined by her. She is the one who has set him free, and although he decides the course of the greater part of their journey, Anna is the one who decides the progression of their relationship.

Anna's subsequent dealings with men underscore her rejection of their masculine based power and their attempts to define her as an object of their sexual oppression. The first attempt to sexually oppress Anna takes place in the timeless space of Roberto and Anastatia's traveling circus trailer. Anna, naked and vulnerable, is approached by Roberto, a perverse anachronistic mythical archetype of sexuality: “I et forkvaklet mytologisk billede står manden i døren med en hvid, hoven fugl på hver skulder” [In a warped mythological picture the man stands in the door with a white, haughty bird on each shoulder] (Rifbjerg 133). Schwer's timely arrival thwarts Roberto's sexual aggression. At the same time, it allows Anna to escape from playing a role in the circus act, “Culpa e Pena” [Guilt and Punishment], an allegory for her life inside the bounds of male dominated society. At this point, Schwer is a reflection of Anna's rejection of the male-defined female and therefore an accomplice to her redefinition of the feminine.

The failed rape of Anna is perhaps the ultimate expression of her rejection of male attempts to define her identity based on sexual dominance. The violence against Anna is repaid by violence. When she kills her attackers, Anna has finally fully removed the possibility of male definition. This is reflected in the new direction her relationship with Schwer assumes. Earlier, in Switzerland, she has accepted him into her life as if he were her brother. The sexual relation they have is initiated by Anna and is devoid of dominance. Now, after the sojourn in Switzerland and Anna's attempted rape, Schwer becomes dependent on Anna. Anna is the one who decides that they must leave their temporary hideout – a dark, warm potato cellar, a reflection of the womb and

the feminine space. Anna's final move towards self definition comes after Schwer's timely death. Anna finds herself on *Langelinie* contemplating the most self-destructive act possible – suicide. However, discovering the pistol to be empty, she drops it into the water. Immediately, her thoughts focus on Minna: “Det bringer Minna tilbage igen. Jeg siger navnet for mig: Minna, Minna, Minna, Min lille Minna, min lille mini-Anna” [It brings Minna back again. I say the name to myself: Minna, Minna, Minna. My little Minna, my little mini-Anna] (Rifbjerg 250). Anna has reaccepted Minna, and through this act, has been able to re-fuse the two disjointed parts of her self, *Anna* and *jeg*, into a single Anna. The balance between impulse (suicide) and responsibility (Minna) has been restored, but in a new fashion. Importantly, the acceptance of responsibility comes from within. As with Marie's quest, Anna's quest results in a new self-defined individual and the cessation of her self-destructive tendencies.

Anna's synchronic search and Marie's diachronic search reveal the desire of the problematic hero to move from the periphery to the center, moving as it were from the circle's circumference to the focus of an ellipse, establishing themselves on distinct but even footing with their earlier male oppressors and deconstructing, for themselves, the power structures which had degraded their worlds and rendered their lives valueless. The violence of this recentering process is reflected time and again in the cathartic breaks and physical clashes which dot the texts. While the distinct historic times, both those of the texts and those of composition, have left their indelible marks on the actants and their worlds, the persistence of societal power structures leads to the commonality of quest. And each quest is successful in its own particular way. Despite the self-destructive and seemingly masochistic inclinations of the two heroes, the quests are ultimately constructive. Marie finally finds herself unfettered by social obligations and connections, able to live *her own life*. Anna goes through a similar process, and regains a sense of value, emphasized in her ability to reaccept Minna and thereby fuse the two parts Anna and *jeg* into one complete, balanced and self-defined Anna. While neither work could be characterized as a purely sociological novel, both works address the quest of the problematic hero for value in a degraded world. The social climber may consider Marie and Anna as abysmal failures, but a compassionate reader can not help but applaud their *individual* successes.

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## Fire utrykte breve fra H. C. Andersen

I privateje<sup>1</sup> findes de nedenfor gengivne hidtil utrykte breve fra H. C. Andersen. Da de på enkelte punkter supplerer vor viden om digteren og specielt om hans forhold til kritikeren og digteren P. L. Møller, kan en offentliggørelse måske påregne nogen interesse.

### I

*Til Peter Theodor Schorn*<sup>2</sup>

Kjøbenh: den 12 Dec 1837.

Høistærede!

De fik »paa et Par Dage« den tyske Oversættelse af Improvisatoren,<sup>3</sup> nu er det et Par Uger siden, De vil altsaa ikke tage mig det ilde op at jeg beder Dem om at sende mig Bogen, som rimeligviis ligger glemt paa Deres Reol.

Det interesserer mig naturligtvis at vide hvorledes det gaaer med Deres Oversættelse af: »Kun en Spillemand!«,<sup>4</sup> hver Dag har jeg ventet at høre lidet fra Dem. Dersom det ikke stod trykt bag i Bogen at en Oversættelse var i Arbeide, da vilde vist Ecn eller Anden være ifærd med den,<sup>5</sup> nu skeer det ikke, og jeg er derfor særdeles begjærlig efter at høre om Deres Virksomhed, skriv mig til derom i et lille Epistel, med den tyske Bog.

Har De hørt, den for mig behagelige Efterretning at i Begyndelsen [af] 1838 vil i Paris udkomme en fransk Oversættelse af Improvisatoren?<sup>6</sup>

Lev vel!  
venskabeligst  
H. C. Andersen

ST.

Hr. Schorn

i Kjøbenhavn

afleveres i den reitselske Boglade.<sup>7</sup>