



THE LANGUAGE AND MAIN IDEAS OF ARNE GARBORG'S WORKS

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BORG'S WORKS

PREFACE

Garborg's literary work presents a double interest: first, the intrinsic value of what he has written, regardless of the language used; and, secondly, his position in the language movement in Norway. That Garborg is the foremost writer of Landsmaal is generally recognized. The movement for a purely national language would admittedly not have attained the position it occupies today, had not Garborg fought for such a language and written his masterpieces in it. I have, therefore, thought it advisable to begin the present study of Garborg with a brief account of his ideas on language reform in Norway, along with an exposition of the types of Landsmaal which he has used at various times.

In the second and longer part of this study I have purposely confined myself to an exposition of his main ideas, and I have tried to present things from his point of view. I have not concerned myself with the many and interesting points of technique which Garborg's works suggest.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank Professor George T. Flom, of the University of Illinois, for many valuable suggestions offered me while I was writing this thesis and preparing it for the press.

CONTENTS

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	135
PART I. GARBORG'S LANGUAGE (LANDSMAAL).....	137
PART II. AN EXAMINATION OF GARBORG'S LITERARY WORKS	152
1. GARBORG'S EARLY LIFE.....	152
2. STUDY OF GARBORG'S LITERARY WORKS IN RELATION TO THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT....	154
CONCLUSION.....	192

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ARNE GARBORG

PART I.

GARBORG'S LANGUAGE (LANDSMAAL)

Introductory. Garborg ranks not only as a great writer in Norwegian literature but also as one of the most important influences in the Landsmaal-movement in Norway.

In order to make Garborg's work as a language reformer clear, it will be well to review briefly the historical conditions which led to the present situation in Norway with its two literary languages, both employed as literary mediums and both legally recognized.

The old language of Norway attained its highest literary development in Norway and Iceland during the 12th and 13th centuries; as far as Norway is concerned, that language fell into decay during the late Middle Ages.¹ The causes for this were many. The Black Death, which appeared in Bergen in 1349, swept the country, the Hanseatic League controlled the trade centers, the Norwegian peasant nobility—the backbone of Old Norway—was practically destroyed as a political power by the rather absolute Norwegian kings, and finally, Norway became, in 1380, united with Denmark through a union of the two crowns. Danish functionaries began to appear in Norway not long after; little by little Danish became the speech of the cities and the centers of culture. In the year 1450, King Christian I decreed that from that time on Danish should be the official language in Norway. Danish preachers came with the Reformation, and they preached in the Danish language. In the more remote districts Danish did not gain a foot-hold, however; the Old Norwegian maintained itself in the form of peasant dialects that from now on diverged more and more. Such were the conditions from now on for over three hundred years.

In the year 1814, when Norway separated from Denmark, the language of cultured intercourse in Norwegian cities was rather largely Danish, the language of literature entirely so. Danish was used as the language of instruction in the recently established University of Norway.² Church service was everywhere conducted in Danish and newspapers and periodicals were everywhere printed

¹ See Hægstad, *Norsk Maalsoga for skule og heim*. Oslo, 1907. Noreen, *Altisländische und altnorwegische Grammatik*, 3rd ed., Halle, 1903.

² Established 1811, opened 1813.

in this language. The real nature of the country dialects as independent modern forms of the old language of Norway was not at that time understood. The dialects were for the most part considered to be mere corruptions of Danish.

But Danish in Norway could naturally not maintain itself as a pure Danish. From about 1830 it begins to undergo considerable change through the more or less conscious effort of writers who wished to give it a national form. The Norwegian poet Henrik Wergeland began to introduce Norwegian words in his poems, mainly to give local color to peasant themes. In 1835 he published an article, *Om norsk Sprogreformation*, in which he set forth the necessity of bringing Danish nearer to the spoken dialects of Norway.³ There was now a growing number of Norwegians who felt that Danish was not in all things the best language for Norway. But nothing like a complete break with Danish seems to have been seriously thought of. Then appeared Ivar Aasen, born 1813, a self-taught peasant from Søndmøre, Western Norway.⁴ He was for a time a country schoolmaster; but little by little he drifted into philological studies. Frederik M. Bugge and others became aware of his rare talents for linguistic investigations, and in the year 1842 he was given a small stipend to enable him to journey from district to district in order to collect dialect material. After six years of this labor appeared Aasen's *Det norske Folkesprogs Grammatik* and in 1850 he published his *Ordbog over det norske Folkesprog*. A little later Aasen set about to construct a sort of norm—a language which was to preserve the common elements in the Norwegian dialects and level out the differences between them. In 1858 *Dølen*, a journal published by A. O. Vinje, began its career. This early first organ of the Landsmaal writers ceased with the death of Vinje in 1870.

From 1858 to the time of Vinje's death the battle between the partisans of Danish and those of the Landsmaal had raged with much bitterness. Then followed a lull. Vinje was dead; Aasen was getting old; no great writer had as yet arisen within the ranks

³ For an excellent discussion of the life, labor, attempted linguistic reforms, as well as the general significance of Wergeland, see H. Koht, *Henrik Wergeland*, Chr., 1908.

⁴ See Arne Garborg, *Ivar Aasen*. Oslo, 1909. Ivar Aasen, *Syn og Segn*, Aug. 1913; *Ivar Aasen*, ved Arne Garborg, Anders Hovden, Halvdan Koht, 1913.

of the reformers. The outlook was not encouraging. At this juncture appeared Arne Garborg (born 1851), the man who was destined to become the first great writer in Landsmaal and through his writings to raise Landsmaal from the position of an experiment to the position of a literary medium recognized everywhere in Norway and widely practiced.⁵

In 1876 Garborg wrote a review of Janson's *Fraa Danskeidi*. This review drew young Garborg into a long and quite bitter controversy in *Aftenposten*. He had for principal opponents Hartvig Lassen, Johan Storm, and L. Daae. This controversy led Garborg to take a definite stand on the language question. He had early tended in the direction of Landsmaal,⁶ now he took the step fully.⁷ I shall now turn to Garborg's work in the cause of language reform in Norway.

Garborg's Place in the Language Movement. We may first consider Garborg's views relative to the language situation in Norway. I shall base my exposition on the following books, pamphlets, and articles by Garborg.

1. *Den ny-norske Sprog- og Nationalitetsbevægelse*. Chr., 1877.
2. *Norsk eller dansk-norsk?* Bergen, 1888.
3. *Vor Sprogudvikling*. Chr., 1897.
4. "Vor nationale situation." *Samtiden*, 1900. Pp. 148-162.
5. *Ivar Aasen*. Chr., 1909.
6. *Vaar nationale Strid*. Christiania, 1911.

In 1877 Garborg published "*Den ny-norske Sprog- og Nationalitetsbevægelse*." It is a book of 240 small pages printed in the form of open letters to the opponents. These letters and arguments grew out of the documentation made necessary by the newspaper controversy which I have referred to above. Garborg's aim is to define the issue, clarify matters by giving adequate definitions, and to answer once for all various questions and objections. The book is the work of a young man. The writer moves about rather jaunt-

⁵ I shall discuss below Garborg's place in this literature.

⁶ For a statement of Garborg's early attitude on Landsmaal, see *Syn og Segn*, XVII, pp. 14-15.

⁷ For a general discussion of the language situation in Norway see my articles in *Publications of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study*, Vol. I, pp. 165-178, and *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. XIII, pp. 60-87.

ily, but, after all, the book is the most complete, brilliant, and readable work that has appeared on the subject of the principles involved in the language situation in Norway. It will be desirable to examine this book somewhat in detail here.

Positive enactments of law can do little to aid the new language or to hamper its onward march. Historical factors will operate in spite of the individual will. Landsmaal is not something which springs from the brain of a few faddists, but rather something which has the onward sweep of historical forces—awakening nationality, the Norwegian will to live—to carry it forward. I quote:

“De kan stole paa mit Ord: jeg agter *ikke* at omvende Dem. Dersom jeg vilde dette, saa maatte det være fordi jeg troede, at Maalsagens Ve og Vel ganske eller dog væsentligt beroede paa *Dem*,—og det er netop det, jeg *ikke* tror. Man diskuterer bestandig Maalsagen, som om den var en blot og bar *Mulighed*, noget, som nok *kunde* sættes i Værk, hvis De og jeg i Dag besluttede, at den skulde sættes i Værk, men som rigtignok ogsaa maa falde, dersom vi fatter den modsatte Beslutning. Dette beror paa et radikalt Feilsyn. Sprog- og Nationalitetsreisningen er en Sag, som netop ikke længer beror paa Deres og mit For-godtbefindende. Den er et *historisk Fænomen*, indtraadt i Livet i Kraft af bestemte *historiske Forudsætninger*.”⁸

And I may quote the following lines touching Garborg's views of language in relation to national feeling and the will to live:

“*Dersom* der er en ‘norsk Nationalitet,’ mhhh!—saa vil dette simpelt hen *aabenbare sig* deri, at den objektiverer sig i en selvstændig Form. Gjør den *ikke* dette, saa eksisterer den *ikke*—som *Nationalitet* nemlig.”⁹

Garborg then takes up for treatment the idea that the two languages, Landsmaal—or the Norwegian dialects looked upon as ^s unity—and Danish, are gradually to be made more and more alike and finally to merge into one. He deals here with the famous *glide-theory*, which has been much in vogue among the opponents of Landsmaal and has found acceptance even among some of the partisans of the latter language. The glide-theory holds that by almost insensible gradations Danish will merge with Norwegian by taking up Norwegian words and constructions through the influence of the Norwegian milieu. This view does not meet with much favor on the part of Garborg. He asks: assuming that we begin by making Danish our basis for ulterior linguistic growth, how are we to get a *Norwegian* language? Assuming the answer

⁸ *Den ny-norske*, etc., p. 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

to be—as indeed it has been—: ‘by taking up Norwegian words and idiomatic expressions,’ Garborg says:

“For at kune blive helt og virkeligt optagne, maa nemlig de ‘norske Gloser i Regelen først *skifte Ham*, i.e., bøje sig ind under det danske Sprogidiom, de danske Sproglove. Hvad vil saa Resultatet være?—Det vil være—ikke Danskens Fornorskelse, men netop *Danskens egen Udvikling qua Dansk*.”¹⁰

The real criterion of the independence of a language is its individuality, its power to mould into its own form the foreign materials that it uses:

“Sproget bliver med et Ord—lad os gjentage det—en *Organisme*. Organismen er ikke=sit materielle Stof, tvertimod, Stoffet er blot Organismens *Middel*; den skifter stadig Stof og er dog altid sig selv, i.e., den samme levende, samvirkende Complex af Love, den samme ustanseligt pulserende *Virksomhed*, ved hvilken den netop opretholder sig.”¹¹

Thereupon Garborg considers the language of the cities and its fitness to be the basis of a national language for Norway. He holds that the speech of the cities is not sufficiently independent, that it represents more or less a transitional stage. It cannot be made the basis of a new language as it, in its different forms, is either a very hybrid form of Norwegian or is provincial Danish.¹²

In regard to *Norwegian* literature Garborg holds that the mere subject matter of the literary work and the birth-place of the writer are not sufficient to establish the nationality of the art product in question. A Norwegian theme can be treated by a Frenchman in French, for instance; likewise writers born in Norway may treat Norwegian themes in the Danish language; the result is not Norwegian literature. Steen Steensen Blicher wrote about Jutland; B. Bjørnson, about Norway. Bjørnson is Norwegian in the sense that Blicher is Jutish. In both cases some dialect words and native forms are used to give local color. How shall we then understand “Norwegian literature?”

“Kort og godt og i al Almindelighed: Dersom man ved ‘Norsk’ forstaar noget *Nationalt*, sideordnet med f. Ex. Dansk og Engelsk, saa er vor Literatur *ikke* norsk. Men dersom man ved ‘Norsk’ forstaar noget *provincielt*, sideordnet med f. Ex. Jydsk og Skotsk (Walter Scott),—saa er vor Literatur norsk. Noget mere bestemt Svar ved ikke jeg at give.”¹³

¹⁰ *Den ny-norske*, etc., p. 32.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹² “Gaar man ud fra Dansken, saa vil man ogsaa blive siddende i Dansken, . . .” p. 50.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

There is, he says, too great a waste of time on the part of many a Norwegian in an effort to translate himself into Danish. To have to do so is a hardship, and one which falls especially heavily upon the peasants and those who have least time and qualifications for doing it successfully.¹⁴

The adoption of Landsmaal as the language of Norway would not, Garborg holds, be a backward step in civilization and culture. To go back to an older form of the language, which a part of the nation has lost through foreign influence, is not necessarily retrogression. A written language must be created by the fact that someone begins to use it in writing. It must be developed by use. It cannot be found ready made. Garborg shows that similar struggles have taken place, or are going on now, in Finland, Belgium, Hungary, Greece, and elsewhere.¹⁵

The series of letters which I have quoted from above appeared in print in 1877. Aasen's Landsmaal—Aasen's norm—was well developed and well known by this time, yet Garborg, while as a matter of fact he follows Aasen's norm rather closely in his first books, departs in theory from Aasen's standard form, or does not attach much value to any literal interpretation of it. On page 76 of the work in question he speaks about the vocalic nature of the endings in the Norwegian dialects; then in a footnote he remarks that Aasen has restored certain consonants by reason of their presence in classical Old Norse:

“For det skrevne Sprog har dog Ivar Aasen her fra Oldsproget indsat Konsonanterne, da han har anseet dem som nødvendige for et Skriftsprog. Nogen Indflydelse paa Udtalen skulde dette naturligvis ikke have. Nyere Maalmænd han imidlertid—paa Grundlag af det mere moderne fonetiske Princip—bortkastet disse 'døde' Endelser. Det er en Selvfølge, at Striden mellem de to Principer for Sprogets Orthografi maa være særdeles levende her, hvor det netop gjælder Fundamenteringen.”¹⁶

In regard to the problem as to what form of Landsmaal is to be used in the schools Garborg says that there are several ways in which one may solve that problem. One may normalize the dialects of two or three main districts or else choose a norm, and this norm ought then without a doubt to be that of Aasen. Aasen's

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁵ In this connection see Garborg, *Bondestudentar*, which throws light upon this very subject.

¹⁶ See pages 145-186 of *Den ny-norske*, etc.

norm may well be used if the teachers remember the correct practice, which is to let the pupil read his own dialect out of the letters and not mechanically pronounce every letter. And the essential matter is that the local dialect (bygdemaal) be used in oral instruction.¹⁷

The essential things in this series of letters by Garborg may be summarized as follows:

1. The language struggle comes by historical necessity as an expression of the Norwegian will to live. It is intimately connected with Norwegian nationality; and if Norway possesses a latent or partly realized nationality, the separate language will be one of the chief tests of this same nationality; for "la langue est la nation."

2. A Norwegian language cannot be evolved by "improving" Danish, by adopting Norwegian words and phrases to the extent permitted by Danish language feeling; for the Danish formative power will assert itself and mould and modify the Norwegian elements until they are in harmony with Danish. Danish, therefore, cannot furnish a receptacle into which the Norwegian dialects may pour their riches freely.

3. It will not be a backward step to elevate the popular spoken language to the rank of a written language. The plan is not to suppress Danish at once, but to develop by use the native Norwegian language until it shall be fit to take over the functions of Danish.

4. Garborg does not seem to be fully clear as to what is meant by "Norwegian language." Does it mean the great multiplicity of dialects, the common elements in these, or a normalized form like Aasen's Landsmaal? On the whole Garborg has too little respect for the norm, and has in germ, or fully developed, all the "principles" which have allowed him the astonishing language fluctuations which I shall point out farther on.

5. There is much toil and a great waste of energy encountered in being, so to speak, translated from Norwegian into Danish. Yet this is the task that is put upon every peasant child in Norway. It is not a burden for the city people, to whom Danish has to all intents and purposes become the mother tongue.

6. Garborg merely touches upon the idea of the "two races" in

¹⁷ *Den ny-norske*, etc., p. 76.

Norway—Norwegian peasants and parts of the city population on the one hand and descendants of Danish, German, Scotch, and Dutch immigrants on the other, who often belong to the upper classes and for whom Danish is as much “Norwegian” as any dialect of native Norwegian origin. This latter class seems to say: “Danish is Norwegian because *we* use it, for we are the real Norwegians.” Garborg develops this idea more fully later.

The next work by Garborg which I shall consider is one bearing the name: *Norsk eller dansk-norsk?*, and which appeared in Bergen in the year 1888. It is a series of answers to attacks on Landsmaal by B. Bjørnson. Here Garborg emphasizes again the difficulties of the task the Norwegian peasant has who tries to become so proficient in Danish that he may speak it with clearness and ease.

Already we find that Garborg puts greater emphasis upon the *bygdemaal*, the local peasant dialects. On page seven we find this statement: “Bygdemaal in the school! that is the language reform (maalsagen) I desire.”

In answer to the charge by Bjørnson that Landsmaal is not needed, Garborg says:

“Men det er i Utrængsmaal! siger Bjørnson, og saa nævner han mig som Exempel. Jeg er ‘Bevægelsens første Mand,’ og endda skriver jeg Dansk bedre end Norsk; have vi mere Vidnesbyrd behov?”

“Jeg begynder at bli kjed af den Kompliment nu. Allerede Hartvig Lassen sa den Ting, da jeg for ti Aar siden begyndte at skrive om Maalet i ‘Aftenbladet,’ og siden siger de det bestandig, naar de skal sige noget slaende.

“De kunde vel engang begribe, at naar et ikke ganske ubegavet Menneske arbejder energisk i tyve Aar paa at lære et Sprog, saa maa han vel til syvende og sidst kunne det ogsaa. Landsmaalet derimod—jeg har ikke havt en Times Undervisning i at skrive det; det var noget, jeg simpelthen tog mig til, da jeg var 27 Aar; dertil kommer, at Landsmaalet jo i sig selv ikke har den Udvikling endnu som Dansken. Naar jeg saa tiltrods for alt dette har kunnet bruge Landsmaalet til Forfatterskab i alle mulige Kulturemner—Politik, Religion, Æsthetik; og naar jeg ovenikjøbet i dette samme Maal har leveret skjønliterære Arbejder, der staar paa Højde med, og er fuldt saa moderne som det meste af det, der skrives paa Dansk-norsk,—saa synes jeg, man deraf burde drage den Slutning, at altsaa kan Landsmaalet bruges til Kulturmaal. Men *det* finder de ikke paa! Den eneste mulige Slutning,—den drager de aldrig.”¹⁸

We remember that Landsmaal—Aasen’s norm particularly—had been made light of on all sides, that it was called a one-man paper

¹⁸ *Norsk eller dansk-norsk?* p. 12-13.

language, a language nowhere spoken, a language too heavy and archaic for present use. Garborg, too, seems at this time to have been somewhat shaken in his faith in Aasen's form of Landsmaal. In fact he abandoned the Aasen norm about this time and turned to a decidedly more East Norwegian language. On page twenty-four of *Norsk eller dansk-norsk?* we find the following significant words:

"Det afgjørende Kjendetegn paa gammelt eller fremskredet i sproglig Henseende er *Endelserne*; jo flere Endelser, jo ældre. Men i den Henseende er Norsk- en, som vi har set, mere fremskreden end Dansk og Svensk; selv i Aasens Form, der ellers paa Grund af en romantisk Misforstaaelse har søgt at overdække og bortdølge vort Folkemaals Modernitet, hvorfor ogsaa Udviklingen gaar i Retning af at fjerne alt det kunstige Gammelvæsen,—selv i Aasens Form er Norsk- en vel saa moderne som Dansk og Svensk. Jo mere Landsmaalet faar Mod til at kaste de gamle, gilde Greier, det blev overklædt med i en Tid, da man trodde det gjaldt at reise 'Fædrenes Maal' istedetfor at reise et praktisk, hjemligt Sprog for vore Børn,—des mere uimodsigelig vil det vise sig, at af de tre skandinaviske Sprog er Norsk- en med samt sine Medlyd og Tvelyd det ubetinget moderneste."¹⁹

In *Vor Sprogudvikling*, Chr., 1897, we find among other things the statement that: Landsmaal is an attempt to find a common written form for our dialects (en fælles skrivemaade). It is the dialects and not so much Aasen's form that one must rely on, for one cannot fail to admit that the dialects "exist." The use of the norm—Aasen's or any other—is not as a final language to be forced upon the people but as a means to bring the dialects and their wealth before the nation. Its function is to show the people constantly what is really and essentially Norwegian. If now we ask: what is the *right* form of Landsmaal? Garborg answers in "Vaar nationale Strid," page 24, as follows: "Landsmaal is the form in which every peasant dialect recognizes its own essential elements."

We have seen that Garborg holds principles which abundantly allow for language variations and fluctuations. I shall now attempt to outline the various types that were the result of this attitude.

Types of Garborg's Landsmaal. I shall set up the following tests for determining the types of Landsmaal used at various times by Garborg.

1. (a) The ending of the strong fem. sing. def. and the neut. pl. def. of nouns.

¹⁹ *Norsk eller dansk-norsk?* p. 24.

- (b) The treatment of weak feminine nouns.
2. The ending of the infinitive.
 3. The omission or retention of *t* in certain neuter forms other than nouns; the omission or retention of *t* in the def. sing. of neuter nouns.
 4. The omission or retention of the *r* of the plural of nouns when the pl. def. article is added.
 5. Greater or less prevalence of *i*-forms in verbs, etc.
 6. Certain verbal forms (*kasta* for *kastade* or *kastad*, for instance).

Type A. This form of Landsmaal is Garborg's first and his nearest approach to Aasen's norm. The only notable differences are that Garborg, unlike Aasen, uses no plural forms of the verb and does not use the dative in any living function. Type A has, in order of the tests set up, the following appearance:²⁰

1. (a) The ending of strong fem. sing. def. and neut. pl. def. of nouns is *i*.

Fem. sing. def. *bygdi*

Neut. pl. def. *ordi*

- (b) The weak feminine nouns are treated as follows:

Weak fem. sing. indef. *tyngsla*

“ “ pl. def. *þipa*

“ “ “ indef. *fillur*

“ “ “ def. *gjenturne*

As we see, this class of nouns has the ending *a* for both forms of the singular, and the vowel of the plural is *u*. This agrees with Aasen's form except that Aasen wrote *fillor* and *gjentorne*, that is, *o* for *u* in the two forms of the plural.

2. The ending of the infinitive is *a*, except in such verbs as *sþy*, *sjaa*, etc.

arbeida—later *arbeide*

vera — “ *vera*

skriva — “ *skrive*

3. The *t* of the neuter is kept, in harmony with Aasen's form.

nokot—later *noko*

voret — “ *vori*

diktat— “ *dikta*

arbeidet (noun)—later *arbeide*

²⁰ The examples which I use are such as occur, so to speak, on every page throughout the works which belong to this type, hence I have not considered it necessary to indicate the place of occurrence.

4. The *r* of the plural is kept when the pl. def. article is added.

gjenturne
taksteinarne

5. The *e*-forms are used.

voret —later *vori*
fenget — “ *fengi*
gjenget — “ *gjengi*
frukter — “ *fruktir*
jolegjester—later *jolegjestir*
komen — “ *komin*

6. In this early period Garborg uses such verbal forms as:

talad for later *tala*
vaagad “ “ *vaaga*
sopad “ “ *sopa*
diktat “ “ *dikta*

that is, in the later form he has come nearer to the living dialects of Norway.

The following major works²¹ may be included under type A. *Ein Fritenkjar*, written 1878, appeared in book-form, Chr., 1881; *Bondestudentar*, appeared in book-form, Bergen, 1883; *Forteljningar og Sogur*, Chr., 1884; *Mannfolk*, Bergen, 1886.

In *Mannfolk* we find a slight difference of language from type A, but this is not sufficient to require a separate classification. The weak feminines, which had in type A the following scheme:

Sing. indef. *-a*
“ def. *-a*
Pl. indef. *-ur*
“ def. *-urne*

now have:

Sing. indef. *-e*
“ def. *-a*
Pl. indef. *-ur*
“ def. *-urne*

In this matter Garborg has moved nearer to the dialects of Eastern Norway.

The following selections will illustrate type A and the same normalized to the present form of Garborg's Landsmaal (type C).

“Han fylgde Haugum og Jens Rud til Kafe nasjonal, Dagen maatte ‘merk-

²¹ Under “minor works” I include magazine and newspaper articles.

jast.' Ein heil Flokk hadde samlat seg i Kafeen, og dei heldt Fest med Talar og Øl. Det var det ideale Studenterliv, som byrjad i Dag, tenkte Daniel; og der vart Idealitet nok, Festtale-Idealitet i Foss og Flaum. Dei gamle talad for dei unge og dei unge for dei gamle, Bystudenten Møller talad for Bondestudentarne og Hans Haugum for Bystudentarne,—det vil segja for dei Bystudentarne, som hadde Frisyn og Vidsyn nok til at slaa Lag med Bonden; dertil svarad Bystudenten Møller med ein stor Tale for Bondefolket. Bonden var Fortidi og Bonden var Framtidi; Bonden sat inne med Fedra-Arven, og Bonden sat inne med Framgangstankarne; Bonden var Krafti, Bonden var Mergen, Bonden aatte Landet, og Bonden vilde bera det fram.”²²

“Han fylgde Haugum til Kafe National; dei vilde ‘mærke Dagen.’ Ein heil Flokk hadde samla seg i Kaffistogo; der vart det Gilde med Talur og Øl; det ideale Studenterliv byrja no, tenkte Daniel. Og det vart Festtale-Idealitet i Foss og i Flaum. Dei gamle tala for dei unge og dei unge for dei gamle; ein Bystudent tala for Bondestudentane og ein Bondestudent for Bystudentane, det vil segja for dei Bystudentane som hadde Frisyn og Vidsyn nok til at slaa Lag med Bonden; dertil svara Bystudenten med ein Tale for Bondefolke; Bonden var Fortidi og Bonden var Framtidi; Bonden sat inne med Fedra-Arven, og Bonden sat inne med Framgangstankane; Bonden aatte Lande og Bonden vilde bera det fram.”²³

Type B. The next major work which shows differences from Aasen’s form—radical differences this time—is *Kolbotnbrev og andre Skildringar*, Bergen, 1890.

1. (a) The ending of the strong fem. sing. def. and the neut. pl. def. of nouns is *a*.

Fem. sing. def. *likferda*
Neut. pl. def. *smaafolka*

(b)

Weak fem. sing. indef. *glede*
“ “ “ def. *sida*
“ “ pl. indef. *gjentur*
“ “ “ def. *gjenturne*

2. The ending of the infinitive is here the same as in type A.

3. The *t* of the forms included in this test has been dropped.

noko for earlier *nokot*
lande “ “ *landet*

This change affects the vast majority of neuter nouns.

4. The *r* is retained in the pl. def. as in the preceding type.

timarne
gjenturne
vegjerne

²² *Bondestudentar*, Chr., 1885, 2nd ed. p. 160.

²³ *Skrifter i Samling*, Chr., 1908. Vol. I, page 105.

5. The *e*-forms are used as in the preceding type.

aksler for later *akslir*
gjete “ “ *gieti*

6. Forms like *kastad*, *ventad*, *eggjat* have now become *kasta*, *venta*, *eggja*. These latter forms are henceforth permanent with Garborg and represent the pronunciation in most of the Norwegian dialects.

One may include under type B the following works: *Kolbotnbrev og andre Skildringar*, Bergen, 1890; *Hjaa ho Mor*, Bergen, 1890; *Fred*, Bergen, 1892.

The following selection from *Fred* will serve as an example of type B.

“Her og der uppetter Bakkar og Res kryp laage Hus ihop i Smaakrullar som søkjande Livd. I den tette Lufta hildrer dei seg halvt burt, sveiper seg i Torvrøyk og Havdis som i ein Draum; stengde og stille ligg dei burtetter Viderne som Tusseheimar. Rundt Husa skimtar det fram bleike grøne Flekkjer av Aaker og Eng som Øyar i Lyngvidda; kvar Bite og kvar Lepp er avstengd og innlødd med Steingjerde som lange Røyser.

“I desse Heimarne bur Folke.

“Det er eit sterkt, tungt Folk, som grev seg gjennom Live med Grubling og Slit, putlar med Jorda og granskar i Skrifta, piner Konna av Aur'en og Von av sine Draumar, trur paa Skillingen og trøyser seg til Gud.”²⁴

I now give the same selection from Garborg's complete works, where the language has been normalized to Garborg's present form of Landsmaal.

“Her og der uppetter Bakkar og Res kryp laage Hus ihop i Smaakrullar som søkjande Livd. I den tette Lufti hildrar dei seg halvt burt, sveiper seg i Torvrøyk og Havdis som i ein Draum; stengde og stille ligg dei burtetter Vid-dine som Tusseheimar. Rundt Husi skimtar det fram bleike grøne Flekkir av Aaker og Eng som Øyar i Lyngviddi; kvar Bite og kvar Lepp er avstengd og innlødd med Steingjerde som lange Røysir.

“I desse Heimane bur Folke.

“Det er eit sterkt, tungt Folk, som grev seg gjennom Live med Gruvling og Slit, putlar med Jordi og granskar Skrifti, piner Korn av Aur'en og Von av sine Draumar, trur paa Skillingen og trøyser seg til Gud.”²⁵

In *Haugtussa*, Chr., 1895, Garborg returns to a form somewhat like that in type A. The strong feminine nouns and the neuter plural end in *i* in the definite form. The weak feminines have *-e*, *-a*, *-ur*, *-urne*. The infinitive ends in *a*. The *t* of the neuter sing. def. is not used. The *r* of the plural is retained when the def.

²⁴ *Fred*, p. 6.

²⁵ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. IV, p. 4.

article is added. The *e*-forms still prevail (*veggjer, gonger*, etc.). The verbs in the past tense are as in type B. *Læraren*, Chr. 1896, has the same form of language as *Haugtussa*.

The next book, *I Helheim*, Chr., 1901, represents a close approach to Garborg's present form of Landsmaal. The differences between the language in this book and the two immediately preceding are: The *r* of the plural is dropped when the def. art. is added. (*Heimane* for *heimarne*; *gravine* for *graverne*). The *i*-forms are beginning to predominate. (*Ferdine, gravine, yvi*.)

We shall now turn to the third main type of Garborg's Landsmaal, which I shall designate as type C. This form of Landsmaal is called the Midland form, because it is based on the dialects of the Midland districts of Norway. It has in brief the following appearance:

1. The ending of strong fem. sing. def. and neut. pl. def. of nouns is *i*. The weak fem. nouns have *-e, -ur, -a, -une*.
2. The ending of the infinitive is *a* after short root-syllables and *e* after long root-syllables (*vera*, but *vinne*).
3. The *t* is omitted in certain neuter forms and in the def. sing. of neuter nouns.
4. The *r* of the plural is regularly omitted when the def. art. is added.
5. The *i*-forms prevail (nouns that would have *-er* in the plural now have *-ir*).

Under this type may be included: *Fjell-Luft*, Chr., 1903; *Knudahei-brev*, Chr., 1904; *Jesus Messias*, Chr., 1906; *Den burtkomne Messias*, Chr., 1907; *Heimkomin son*, Chr., 1908; *Skrifter i Samling*, 7 vols., Chr., 1908; *Kyrkja og Borgarsamfunde, Samtiden* 1911, pp. 8-21.

In *Knudahei-brev* we find some forms which are taken from Garborg's own dialect (Jærbu). These are used merely for local color. Examples are: *I Knudaheio, fjedlo* for *fjelli, huso* for *husi, heia-gjædar*. Here we find the characteristic *o*-ending, used in Western Norway for fem. sing. def. and neut. pl. def. Of late years Garborg evinces now and then a fondness for the dative plural; it occurs, however, only sporadically.²⁶

I shall close this discussion of Garborg's use of Landsmaal by quoting part of a letter which Garborg sent me in answer to my

²⁶ For examples of type C the reader is referred to the normalized form of selections given to illustrate types A and B.

inquiries as to his reasons for these successive changes in his language.

HVALSTAD, NORIG, 17/2. '14.

Eg hev aa takke, (1) for Brev, (2) for eit Stykke i "Publications,"²⁷ "On the Forms of the 'Landsmaal' in Norway." I det Stykke (S. 174) hev De sett fram mitt Grunnsyn i Spursmaale um Skriftformi so godt, at eg no berre hev att aa forklaare, korleis eg er komen innpaa den Synsmaaten.

Aasens Form var min fyrste Kjærleik. Men eg lærde snart aa forstaa, at for Folke var ho "altfor klassisk"; skulde Folke koma med, maatte me faa ein lettare, enklare Skrivemaate. Det var "dei unge" i 1860-aari (Menner som S. Schjøtt, O. J. Fjørtoft o.a.) som lærde meg aa sjaa dette; etterkvart kom eg og meir og meir inn paa Schjøtt's Tanke: at det var Folkevisemaale som var det naturlege Grunnlage for eit nynorskt Bokmaal.

Men daa eg (Hausten 1877) tok til med "Fedraheimen," galdt det aa faa samla den vesle norske Fylkingen, me daa hadde; og det let seg best gjera gjennom Aasensformi (i ei noko lettare Tillempling); den vart daa Redaktionsform. Men Innsendarane fekk bruka kvar si Form, naar dei so vilde; paa den maaten fekk eg og døyvt med *Striden* um Skrivemaaten.

Det var elles ikkje mange som skreiv. Og mest ingen fraa Sørland, Midland, Austland, Trøndelag, der Blade og hadde minst Tingarar. Dette dreiv meg til aa tenkje meir paa Maalformi, og til aa vaage ei og onnur Tillempling (som ei Vise). Noko seinare gjekk eg med paa Sola, Orda (um eg elles snart fann, at den Endingi ikkje rett vilde høva i mitt Maal). Og daa eg i 1899 kom med i ei departmental Nemnd til Fastsetjing av ei Landsmaalsform aat Skulen, saag eg altfor klaart, at det var for tidlegt aa setja upp berre *ei* Form; eg gjekk daa med paa ei Sideform til Bruk for Bygdir som ikkje lika den vanlege Landsmaalsformi; og den vart daa bygd paa Tele- (og i det heile Midlands-) dialektar; eg tenkte og, at eit Midlandsmaal maatte vera den lempelegaste Vegen til Semjing millom Austland og Vestland, etterkvart som det Spursmaale kom upp.

Sidan tok eg sjølv Midlandsformi i Bruk. Ho var for det fyrste bygd paa Folkevisemaale, og for det andre kunde det vera godt, at nettupp ein Vestlending tok Midlandsmaale upp; det burde kunne døyve noko paa det gamle gnaal um, at Maalsaki var berre ei Vestlandssak.

Den Midlandsformi som var oppsett til Skulebruk, fekk ikkje mange Forfattarar med seg (og hev no ingen; eg sjølv finn det best no aa halde meg til ei Millomform, som berre nettupp skal vise, at eg ikkje held Formspursmaale for avgjort). Men endaa hev det gjort godt, at Sideformi vart oppsett; Folk veit no, at dei ikkje tarv ræddast for "Tvang." Dermed vert Striden rolegare. Ein gjeng ut fraa, at etterkvart vil dei Formerne vinne som fær Fleirtale med seg; det gjeld daa mindre um aa slaast enn um aa skrive godt og norskt. Det vert daa og klaarare og klaarare, at me hev Fiendar nok, um me ikkje fører Krig innbyrdes.

Med Helsing,

ARNE GARBORG.

²⁷ *Publications of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study*. Vol. I, pp. 165-178.

Part II

AN EXAMINATION OF GARBORG'S LITERARY WORKS

I. *Garborg's Early Life*

Garborg is the son of a West Norwegian farmer. He is a *Jærbu*²⁸ and of peasant stock as far back as the family can be traced.²⁸ He was born on the 25th of January, 1851. He entered school quite early, and was an excellent student. Here he soon showed his passion for writing; he wrote not only the compositions required, but invented themes and subjects to the astonishment of the teachers and his fellow-students.²⁹ He early became a "journalist,"—that is, as a boy of twelve or thirteen he began to work on a hand-written paper, which circulated among the students. Here he gave free reins to his imagination and wrote on all possible and imaginable subjects.

He did not like the never-ending manual labor at home—stole an hour whenever possible to devour whatever books he could lay his hands on. In these early years his life was not happy. In *Knudahei-brev*, p. 128, we are told that "den paulinsk-luthersk-pontoppidanske kristendomen hans far sprengde meir og meir huse."³⁰ No music, no play, no amusements; work, pray, prepare for the life to come—such was the program of the home he lived in. He used to steal out into the next room, and in the cold of winter read till his eyes ached. But he had to have the book lying open inside a large chest, so that the lid could be promptly closed when he heard his father coming. He managed to smuggle in books, and soon had an astounding knowledge of Norwegian and foreign authors. In the little hand-written paper mentioned above, which he exchanged with boys of his own age or older, he wrote book reviews, treated social problems, reforms, in short anything that presented itself.

Garborg began to teach school in 1867. This work gave him

²⁸ See *Knudahei-brev*, Chr., 1904, p. 99.

²⁹ Torkell Mauland, "Arne Garborg's ætt og ungdom." *Syn og Segn*, XVII, p. 8.

³⁰ See *Knudahei-brev*, pp. 127-28, and p. 178.

more leisure for study. He still continued to write for the little paper, showing somewhat of an Ibsen influence. From 1868 to 1870 he studied in the Normal School at Holt. He wrote a long five-act drama called *Syner i Skodd*.³¹ This was never printed, and Garborg now has nothing left of the manuscript. Garborg says with reference to it that he can't say much as to the "Visions" but he feels sure that it contained "Fog" enough. In 1870 Garborg became a teacher in the vicinity of Risør. He began in 1871 to publish a paper called *Seminaristen*. A little later he changed the name to *Lærerstandens Avis*. Garborg managed the paper, wrote most of the contents, and even aided in the printing. In 1872 he founded a new paper, *Tvedestrandsposten*. He was engaged in various ventures of this kind till in 1873 he left for Christiania. He was given an opportunity to contribute to *Dagbladet* and *Bergensposten*; he also continued to send articles to *Tvedestrandsposten*.

The first thing which called general attention to Garborg was a seventy-one page analysis of Ibsen's *Keiser og Galilæer*. This little book was received with favor everywhere, and indeed, the book is very good for a young man of twenty-three to have produced.

In 1874 he entered the famous "Studentfabrik," that is to say, Heltberg's preparatory school at Christiania. He has given us a memorable picture of this school and its genial teacher, old Heltberg, in *Bondestudentar*.

Garborg was admitted to the University in 1875. He did not take the second examination as he had too many other things on his hands. In 1876 he wrote a review of Kristoffer Janson's *Fraa Dansketid*³² which brought him into a prolonged controversy with such men as K. Knudsen, Hartvig Lassen, Ludvig Daae, Johan Storm, in short, with some of the most ardent defenders of Dano-Norwegian or what is now *Riksmaal*. In 1876 he was chosen president of *Det norske Samlaget*. He began publishing *Fedraheimen* in 1877, which paper now became the organ of the language reformers. Since this time Garborg has been a leader and an inspiring influence in the Landsmaal movement.

Much direct testimony by Garborg himself relative to his life

³¹ "Visions through the Fog."

³² The book is in Landsmaal.

and experiences during these early years may be found in *Knudaheibrev*; for indirect testimony, see *Bondestudentar* and *Fred*.³³

II. *Study of Garborg's Literary Works in Relation to the Religious and Cultural Environment*

1. There are two kinds of calm—the calm which precedes and the calm which follows the storm. The first is that of childhood; of innocent, more or less thoughtless functioning; and that of the less gifted, who live to ripe old age without serious questioning. The period of maturity in the life of the more gifted is one of storm and stress, of making a place in the world for one's life and ideas, of violent crises, of seeking to maintain and vindicate human dignity and the values of life. This is the critical period. One of three things may then happen: One may sink back into the lower, more vegetative type of life; one may go to rack and ruin in a general shipwreck of ideals and values; or one may fight one's way through to where there is a larger outlook and a more detached attitude. Garborg belongs to those gifted ones who have passed through the storm and stress. He is now in a rather serene mood of clarified views and calm acceptance of the inevitable.

Garborg presents many phases of development through the years, but there are through all the changes certain easily recognizable elements of identity. As to his character we always find absolute probity, grim earnestness, unquestioned sincerity; as to his intellect, great mobility, large mental outlook, universality of interest and catholicity of appreciation. Religious preoccupations, due to natural bent and early training, pervade all of Garborg's literary work. The large aim and purpose of his life early became to work for the cultural maturity and independence of Norway.

Garborg's style is admirable,—at all times the appropriate word. He has keen flashes of insight given expression in powerful language. He ranges from passages of the most tender lyric beauty to cool, logical exposition, or to statements of the most cutting satire. His books are flooded with ideas; some of his works are not favorite reading with those who seek in literature amusement merely and not enlarging views and emancipating criticism.

³³ For a general account of his life up to 1911, see *Syn og Segn*, Jan. 1911, pp. 1-22; 75-81. Dates of publication of his books and other valuable information will be found in *Syn og Segn*, Jan. 1911, pp. 89-92.

Garborg is one of those writers whose works embody the very age itself. When the Norway of Garborg's day shall have passed away, future students of religion, history, morals, and politics, will find in his works most precious documents. This is admitted by all, even by those critics who at times are inclined to think that Garborg's books lack that plot-interest which is necessary to enable them to occupy a large place in the favor of the general reading public.

Garborg is one of those persons for whom mere living is not life. He is of the same mould as Ibsen, Thomas à Kempis, Nietzsche, Tolstoy. His longing for absolute and permanent worth gives rise to much of his criticism. He is a deeply religious nature, but the spirit of scientific positivism, Higher Criticism, his own mercilessly critical faculty, and the clearness of his thought-processes, make it impossible for him to rest sweetly content in the religion of his childhood. Truth, sincerity, facts, free discussion, these he demands always. What such a life as his may hold of suffering, turmoil, and disillusion can scarcely be understood by one who has not passed through similar stages of development. Garborg is a puzzle to many Norwegians. He is called "free-thinker"—and what horror that name contains in Norway can only be appreciated by one who comes from the same part of Norway as Garborg—and yet Garborg has written things in the deepest and most sincere religious spirit. He knows the Bible well-nigh better than any theologian. He quotes the Bible or uses everywhere phrases cast in a Biblical mould. This is not a mannerism with Garborg, not a mere imitation of Biblical style for flowery rhetorical effects, but a spontaneous, at times unconscious, use of Biblical imagery and diction. This same use of the Scriptures occurs to a lesser extent in some other Norwegian writers. We shall speak of the reasons for this later.

The Norwegian literature of the second half of the XIXth century is a literature of combat, self-examination, hope, despair, and clashes of antagonistic systems. This literature was not content to paint life in a placid, sunny manner. The *why* and the *wherefore* of things is the ever present question. Is life worth living? Is religion a harmful thing or a blessing? Is there a place of safety, where we may store up the values which we create in life? Should

life be taken as a complete system, an entity in and for itself, a rounded-out whole? Or should it properly be looked upon as valuable only in so far as it leads to and prepares for something else? The above questions are such as we constantly meet with in Norwegian writers. Add to this that two official languages—neither of them uniformly written—are struggling for mastery in the land, and one has a fairly exact and complete statement of the elements which work against placidity in the literature of Norway. Norwegian writers are to a great extent treating problems and questions; they reflect the disharmonious complexity of our modern civilization. Garborg is a fair example of this. In his mind have clashed well-nigh all possible systems of the modern world. The Christian religion, which looks upon life as something of value only in so far as it creates values for something beyond itself and which in the Norwegian Lutheran forms of Western Norway is somewhat inimical to a joyous, free “yea-saying to life,” is one important element in the clash. Another is the scientific spirit, which demands that truth shall be established by experiments and careful observation and classification; and still another, the Hellenistic view, which demands the free, healthy, orderly, well-balanced exercise of all our powers and faculties. Given a strong intellect, an eradicable love for one’s people and one’s native land, an intellectual probity and desire for truth which never refrains from following a thought to the bitter end whatever considerations of expediency may intervene; given also a tender heart keenly responsive to beauty whether found in religion or nature—and we have the explanation of Garborg’s works.

To understand Garborg one must study Lutheranism as it has come to be in Western Norway. Pietism, ultra-Puritanism, has swept over Garborg’s native land time and again since the days of the Reformation. The dark, gloomy religious attitude is particularly strong in the mountain valleys and along the deep, narrow fjords of Western Norway. Life here on earth is viewed as a journey—and as it is more pleasant to travel with but a sparing amount of baggage, so it is often held desirable to journey through life with as few earthly possessions as possible.³⁴ The ideal of

³⁴One counteracting influence is the fact that one must, in such a poor land, provide carefully for the morrow, or starve.

asceticism enters in: deny yourself, mortify the flesh, give all or nothing. People often seem to think that Brand in Ibsen's play of that name—Brand, who at all times demands *all or nothing*—is an impossible type. He is not. There are people in Norway today who in the name of religion make essentially the same demands upon weak flesh. Renounce the world, think of heaven early and late, are words constantly heard. Ibsen's celebrated formula *all or nothing* is what the children in many a Norwegian Lutheran home hear from their most tender years. They are told that to drink is sin, to smoke is sin, to play cards is sin, to dance is likewise sin. And the theater is considered on a par with the house of ill fame.

A foreigner may wonder why he finds so many religious preoccupations in Garborg, so many Biblical quotations and so much Biblical diction. He may wonder why the entire Norwegian literature from 1850 on occupies itself so largely with religion. The reason is that religion is a big and dominant element in the life of a Norwegian. The Norwegian either rejoices within it or, as an unconverted sinner, lives under the dark cloud of its condemnation; or, on the other hand, cannot accept its dogmas as true, and yet cannot free himself from it to find abiding peace in something else. The Norwegian religion is sincere and occupies a large place in the life of the common people. It is taught in the elementary schools one or two hours a day. The children in the common schools are required to learn the religious text-books by heart. The result of all this instruction is that Norwegians become so familiar with Biblical quotations and wise sayings that they unconsciously use them in their daily speech as well as in their literary work—even as Milton and Bunyan did in England. This then will explain why we find so much of this quality in Garborg, Bjørnson, Ibsen, and other XIXth century writers in Norway.

Garborg, Bjørnson, and other Norwegian writers have all passed through violent religious crises. Why? At home they were taught that the Bible is true, every part of it inspired, that the values of life—the supreme and eternally abiding values—are connected with the soul and the life to come. When these writers came out into life and began to grow mentally, they came in contact with speculative philosophy, the positive scientific spirit, and with Higher Criticism. They could no longer fully accept the

Bible; their faith in the immortality of the soul was shaken. With the loss of the belief in the soul, with which the values of life were connected, life seemed to lose all meaning, all worth, all purpose. The suffering was extreme; and these men turned at times bitterly against the religious system which had taught them to look for things which cannot be furnished, which had given them guiding principles and means of consolation that would break down when most needed.³⁵

Directly or by implication Garborg criticizes now and then the Norwegian type of religion. The following are some of the faults laid at its door. It has made life too narrow and, as a consequence, has caused much needless suffering. No pleasures are allowed. People brood over sin and fall into morbid self-examination, all of which may end in suicide or insanity. In this connection let us recall that Garborg's own father hanged himself largely because of religious difficulties. Religion is other-worldly in its very essence. This fact may tend to weaken the national feeling of a deeply religious people. The "one necessary thing" becomes *salvation*.

Garborg has attacked the narrow Norwegian religious system because, as he holds, it tends to stifle the legitimate exercise of thought and the spirit of bold, free investigation. He has attacked it for its lack of red-blooded patriotism, for its extreme ascetic attitude, for its too frequent escapes from bitter reality into the realm of fancy. But he often returns in the direction of religion, and is imbued with the spirit of its founder to such an extent that religious people in Norway are waiting and watching for his conversion.

After these preliminary remarks, which I have thought necessary for an intelligent understanding of much of what Garborg has written, we shall pass now to a more detailed examination of his earlier works.³⁶

Garborg has written from the time he could hold a pen. Most of what he wrote before he came to Christiania in 1873 is now lost. But from reports by those who still remember some of

³⁵ As with, e. g., Mrs. Alving in Ibsen's *Ghosts*.

³⁶ For amplification and corroboration of the facts and views which I have presented above, see Garborg *Knudahei brev*; and Hj. Christensen, *Det nittende arhundredes kulturkamp i Norge*.

it, and from what is yet available, we gather that in those early days he was an ardent defender of Christianity—at least in its essentials—and, strange to say, did not think that *Landsmaal* was the language for *him*. In 1873 he published *Smaa stubber af Alf Buestreng*.³⁷

2. Garborg published in 1884 a collection of short stories. The first story, *Av laak Ætt*, was written in the year 1878. It contains nothing of special interest even though one may say that it is a splendid piece of work for so young a man. Another story in the same collection dates from 1879, and bears the title *Seld til den vonde*. It is an excellent story. Garborg, now twenty-eight years old, shows himself in full possession of his powers as a writer. The story has all the weird power of Poe's descriptions of the strange and unearthly and has in addition a remarkable insight into human nature. We have here a story which palpitates with life and human interest, but into which the supernatural is also introduced. The theme is a mother's love and the winning one's way back to virtue by means of love and self-sacrifice. This story is typical of a characteristic of Norwegian story writers in its introduction of the supernatural in the form of God and the devil or in the form of fairies. The reason for this? The concreteness of much of the religious imagery may be given as one reason. Another factor may be sought in the Norwegian scenery, which undoubtedly makes people more responsive to Nature than can ever be the case in less favored regions. The silence of the great fjords, where the moonlight divides sharply the zone of light from the zone of darkness; the great calm of the mountains; the ocean sleeping in its crushing immensity or lashed into fury by the storms of autumn and winter; and, finally, the weird light of the summer midnight—all these are factors in arousing the imagination to fancy and dreams. The inhabitants of Western Norway have peopled Nature with beings of their own creation. The terrible *draug* sails in his half boat, the *nøkk* waits for his prey, the *Huld*—a sort of fairy woman—may be seen on summer nights or even in broad daylight. Then there are *nisser* and *tomtekaller* and a host of other

³⁷ For a discussion of *Alf Buestreng* and the earlier writings of Garborg see my article in *Publ. of the Society for the Adv. Scand. Study*, Vol. II, pp. 181-195.

creatures. Ibsen makes use of the popular superstition—scarcely even a superstition now, of course—that trolls dwell in the mountains. See for instance the Dovre-scene in *Peer Gynt*. Jonas Lie wrote a large collection of stories called *Trold* (*Samlede Værker*, Vol. X).³⁸ The story of Garborg's which I am here discussing shows his ability to picture intense emotions as well as to create scenes of great imaginative power. He shows himself fully acquainted with theological reasonings about good and evil, with popular superstitions about the power of the devil; and he knows how to use Nature to increase the effect sought. The scene in the church where the devil comes to fetch the soul of a lad who has been sold to him by the lad's own mother is one of the most powerful things in all Norwegian literature.³⁹

Before I leave this early collection of short stories, I desire to mention one other. *Ungdom*, written some time before 1884, is a sprightly story in which the author pits against each other the non-moral exuberance of young life without higher culture and higher culture without nature and warmth of heart. He incidentally raises the question of the reasonableness of asking a child of two or three weeks the baptismal questions required by the Lutheran ritual. The story has fine irony throughout.

We may now pass on to a consideration of Garborg's longer works.

3. *Ein Fritenkjar* was written in the summer of 1878 and appeared serially in *Fedraheimen*, the paper of which Garborg was editor since 1877. It appeared in book-form as a second edition, Christiania, 1881. The story treats of an honest doubter, or a freethinker who is thoroughly noble-minded and worthy. Now the conservative people of Western Norway would be inclined to exclude from the realm of the possible any such combination as "freethinker" and "noble-minded," or "worthy"; the sympathetic treatment of an infidel would be looked upon as an attack on Christianity. Hauk, the main character, the "freethinker," the son of a pastor, a student of theology, represents the new element which has put in appearance in Norway. He has lost his religious faith—not only certain matters of detail which may lead to more

³⁸ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. VI, pp. 211-15.

³⁹ I shall speak of the fairy-lore of Western Norway in connection with Garborg's *Haugtussa*.

“refined” or more “extenuated” forms of Christian belief—but a loss of the very essentials of Christianity through independent thought and criticism. This emancipated man falls in love, strange to say, with the orthodox daughter of an orthodox Lutheran minister! He struggles to free himself from this love so as not to bring the girl into inevitable suffering. But she has the noble—not to say somewhat romantic—desire to sacrifice, if need be, her life and happiness to help back to religion the man she loves. They marry—and are happy. A child is born. Shall it be baptized or not? Difficult question for the parents to discuss. The mother decides she must have it baptized. Hauk has given up theology because he does not want to be a hypocrite; he works on a radical paper. His name is given to the public by a pastor. All is over; he is practically hounded from the land. His wife goes home to her parents to weep her life away. Hauk ranges at large for years. When he returns to his native land he finds his wife dead, his own son a very orthodox Lutheran pastor—and the first thing the son does is to try to convert his father. The gray-haired father dies shortly after in the house of his son—without accepting the Christian faith. In the funeral sermon the young pastor pronounces his own father eternally lost.

The story is rather good in plot; from this point of view more “interesting” than some of the later and otherwise more important works of Garborg. It is—I will not say superficial—somewhat sketchy here and there. The book is in its essentials true enough and possible; and it is remarkable that a man so young had already attained so wide an outlook and such power of picturing the clash of systems in society and the clash of emotions in the heart. We find already some excellent bits of psychological analysis and painting of strong feelings. So much for the story. Now as to the thought. The book is fairly flooded with ideas. I shall try to show what these ideas are and the systems with which the book deals by an outline of the main characters which represent in the story these ideas and systems.

The old pastor, father of the girl that Hauk marries, represents the type of minister so well pictured in Ibsen’s *Ghosts*. In his youth he has had doubts, but he has settled back into the faith again, frightened by the terrible *consequences* in this world and the

next that may come to him who loses his faith.⁴⁰ He is upright and sincere and capable of self-sacrifice. Balle, the assistant pastor, represents the narrow, somewhat vulgar, pugnacious, orthodox minister. He sets his face like flint against any new idea that may come from France or elsewhere. Whatever does not readily harmonize with the official Lutheran creed he rejects without more ado. He uses the familiar argument against "freethinking" that if religion is lost, it is merely a question of a short time before all mankind will be moral degenerates and ravenous wolves.⁴¹

The only part of the book that is somewhat violent in tone is the treatment of the Church on pages 88-92; otherwise the author refrains from too direct comment. There is no special glorification of the "emancipation" of freethinkers but rather a dispassionate or somewhat sad exposition of what life has to offer a thinking man. The book deals with the relation of Christianity and advancing unbelief—unbelief due to earnest thought and sincere convictions, not to a desire to profit by the moral laxity which might result from a disintegration of one's childhood faith. The catastrophe is due not to wickedness, hardness of heart, or flying in the face of the positive law of the land, but to the clashings of creeds and systems over which the individuals are not masters. Those in the established order fare the best (Balle or Hauk's father); those partly in both orders are destroyed (Ragna, Hauk's wife); and those who, like Hauk, are outside may retain their soundness of character but are apt to lose life's happiness—unless indeed *happiness* is found in freedom of thought and independence.

It would be interesting to know what Garborg's own religious standpoint was at this time. He does not definitely commit himself in the book except in so far as he shows that an infidel can be a noble character—which view of the matter good orthodox Christians of course find unthinkable. In a letter to Hj. Christensen, Garborg says:

"Der tales om P. L. Hærems religiøse standpunkt; dette udtryk er jo ikke udtømmende; mit "standpunkt" dengang var ikke saa klart. (Sagt i almindelige ord kunde det angives saa omtrent: jeg søgte, som det sig et ungt meneske i den tid egnede og anstod, en universal livsanskuelse; denne skulde omfatte to momenter: "det kristelige" og "det menneskelige," det er, almenkulturen; og

⁴⁰ *Ein Fritenkjar*, Chr., 1881, p. 38.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

det maatte blive de fortvilede bestræbelser paa at "forsone" disse "modsatninger," som skulde kunne kaldes mit standpunkt fra den tid.)"

And again:

"Jeg var endnu ikke omvendt⁴² da jeg skrev "Ein Fritenkjar," omend vistnok længer paa omvendelsens vei, end jeg for mig selv tilstod. Det var en stor revolution for mig, den, og det uagtet jeg—ikke var "kristen."⁴³

4. We shall next take up *Bondestudentar* (Bergen, 1883).

This book is admittedly a comprehensive and valuable social study. It has all the value of a true and realistic document. The main character, the history of whose development and experiences forms the unity of the book, is Daniel Sørbraut, or Daniel Braut, as he is finally called. The story tells how this peasant boy came to study in Christiania and what hardships met him in his early career.

The book begins with a gospel hymn! We are introduced to a peasant family where pietism and religious ideas reign. We have here—as those who are in a position to know aver—a picture of Garborg's own childhood home. Daniel, the young boy, does not want to be a peasant; he does so admire the easy life and fine clothes of the minister and government officials. He is sent to a private school for a while. His poor parents struggle hard to get money to send him to a town school. In due time he is sent there. But the town-boys make life none too pleasant for "bonde-tampen som tala 'landsmaal.'" Here we have the relation of Danish-Norwegian and Landsmaal touched upon. Daniel, as a typical farmer boy of a few years ago, is ashamed of his rural speech, and sets about to learn the city Danish as fast as possible. In due time his parents, with their own and borrowed money, manage to get him to Christiania to prepare for the university. He goes to Heltberg's famous preparatory school. Garborg gives us some unforgettable scenes of student life in the Norwegian capital and of the methods of this unique school, which Bjørnson, Ibsen, and Vinje attended. Various currents of thought meet the boy in the capital. Here are a few staunch defenders of Landsmaal; here are radicals such as *Dølen* (Vinje), ultra-radicals such as *Fram* (Fjørtoft); here are noble humanitarian saints of the old school

⁴²"omvendt," I take it, is not used here in the religious sense but merely as "changed to my more permanent views," come to clearness.

⁴³ See Hjalmar Christensen, *Nordiske Kunstnere*, Chr. 1895. p. 40.

such as "Pater" (Hærem); here are men who risk their all for ideas and ideals; here are also men who abide by religion and the well-established order because in those things lie the greatest promise of material prosperity and advancement of their own selves. Garborg has given us very sympathetic and beautiful pictures of Fram, Dølen, and Pater. This last—a saintly man who persistently refused to think ill of any one, who sought out the good in all he met and did his best to strengthen that good—has been immortalized by Garborg. When students were starving—and that happened often—when they could no longer raise a loan, they would come to "Pater," and pretend that they were converted. He would not pry into their past life but helped them to get money and positions. He was indeed their "Pater," the name by which he came to be known in the student world.

Daniel Braut begins to dissipate somewhat; borrows money from his companions as long as he can—and has abundant chances to starve. And the story of how he goes out to borrow money one evening after nearly starving to death, stands unmatched in all Norwegian literature.⁴⁴ In due time he goes to Hærem ("Pater") is sent to the country in the capacity of *huslærer*, comes into contact with "formal culture," and finds that this is often only a rather thin coat of veneer. Now strange to say, this discovery does not make him see the good points in his own peasant origin. The partial destruction of his idol—the famous "formal culture"—makes him glad; it won't be so hard for him now to qualify among the "cultured." For the sake of money he becomes engaged to the somewhat aged daughter of his employer. In connection with this last feat we have the sad and the comic combined. He writes a letter of proposal. Of course, there must be love in such a letter—but not more than he can, without too much discomfort, redeem when he meets his "sweetheart" face to face. He chooses theology for his study because the theological career furnishes a good living, and, moreover, the professors of theology have such a good, consoling way of settling every troublesome question and disposing of every doubt and difficulty. And when by chance one time he sees Hirsch, his first teacher and the man who tried to instill in his heart disinterested love for the ideal in life, he makes his escape up a side-street. And thus the story ends.

⁴⁴ See *Skrifter i Samling*, pp. 141-49.

Daniel Braut is not a sympathetic figure. He is more or less of a non-entity. His individuality is not strong enough to assimilate and make his own the new which he comes in contact with; he is driven hither and thither like a dry leaf in the wind. The only element of identity which goes through his whole development is a plebeian love of ease. He has, as every young man at all awake intellectually must have, his period of doubt and questioning; but, as his life is scarcely ruled by ideals, and, as he is to a large extent impervious to ideas, he soon settles back, with a sigh of relief, into the rut of the old established order. He must not be taken as a fair example of what the peasant students are—and certainly not now after the *Landsmaal* movement has given more dignity to the peasants.

The book gives the impression—which impression is sustained by Norwegian critics, who are in a position to control the facts—that Garborg does not juggle the main “facts” of the story to suit any preconceived idea or theory. He gives us a somewhat detailed, panoramic exposition of student life, of cultural conditions and of the economic situation in the Norway of the times. We get glimpses—later on he gives us more—of the Bohemian life in the Norwegian capital; and what we see is far from being altogether of the good. The book has a pervading spirit of disillusionment, but not necessarily of despair. Here and there we get bits of trenchant wit and touches of irony—irony not so much in the words as in the very situations themselves. When Garborg preaches in his works, it is the facts that speak with irresistible logic.

Religion, as embodied in “Pater,” is treated with respectful sympathy. Not so the State Church. This Church, which is often a mere department in the government, and the theological professors with their curious logic and eternal considerations of expediency, are at times treated somewhat harshly. The book shows in a way the danger of detaching too suddenly the peasants from the soil—or any class from its environment. It shows the danger of bringing the peasants into a life and environment where their own narrow system of religion and morals is in danger of breaking down and where their cultural background and antecedents are of little help to them in the crisis which comes from being transplanted. The remedy suggested seems to be: Educate the peasants for their work on the farms; teach them to honor their traditions, their own

Norwegian language; teach them to develop their solid peasant virtues rather than to imitate the good and the bad of the cities. This problem of transplanting, which meets the peasant-born student upon his coming to the city, is somewhat like that which meets a people like the Indians when they are suddenly brought into contact with European civilization. They may lose their own manly virtues and adopt quickly the vices of the new system.

The book shows how very often the hopes and ideals of youth are blasted in the struggle for existence; but it also shows how it is possible to cling to those same ideals and through the storm and stress carry them to a higher plane and found them in a clearer way on the more permanent elements in life. The main character is weakly receptive, not powerfully assimilative and reactive. To Braut, religion is not a depository where one may lay up the best of life, but rather a means to an end—and that end is social advancement and material ease. Braut never sees in education a process of ennobling man, of helping man to find himself, and to realize himself, to vindicate his nature, but a means to become like the neatly uniformed functionaries and government officials, whose life seems such an easy one. Braut has had some doubts and troubles, but the heights are not for him; he cannot understand the man who risks common happiness, his career, his very life, that he may find worthy happiness and true life. He asks *are we happy?* but never *have we a right to be happy under the circumstances?* He sinks back into plebeian humdrumness and the well-established order, where the Church sanctifies and the moralists label actions by approved systems.

The book is a most realistic study, sad as so much in life must be. Wings are clipped, hopes abandoned, dreams given up, till at last little but the vegetative phases of life are left. The above is the exposition of the book, but not its logic. Its logic is: a man finds his level as surely as water does, and however bitter and long the struggle, he who remains true to himself will keep safe the greatest in life—his self-respect.

5. In *Bondestudentar* part of the problem was the relation of the classes, the different social strata. In *Mannfolk* (Chr., 1886) the problem is rather the relation of individuals of the same class, the relation of the sexes and the problem of love and “free love.”

The book has not a strongly centralized plot, but is rather a sort of panoramic of Bohemian life, fornication, adultery, misery, passions, discords, and theories of all sorts. It is ultra-realistic. It is also one of a number of books which at this time came from the hands of different writers all treating nearly the same subject. Two of these books, *Fra Kristianiabohemen* and *Albertine*, both by Norwegian writers, were confiscated by the Norwegian government. I cannot pass upon the wisdom of the action of the Norwegian government in the case of these confiscated books as I have not been able to procure them. But the government most assuredly did right in not confiscating Garborg's book, realistic and outspoken as it is. For, however much he describes the passions and the sins of the sexes, Garborg does it in such a way that the scenes which he describes, and the images which he evokes to lend truth to his exposition, never inspire one to sin. Garborg speaks freely; the most sacred privilege is to him the right of "free discussion."

Bondestudentar and *Mannfolk* are by Garborg placed in the same volume of his *Skrifter i Samling*. And properly so. We meet somewhat the same persons in the two works. The chief character of *Mannfolk*, Kruse, rooms at the house of Daniel Braut, who, it will be remembered, was the main character in *Bondestudentar*. This idea of introducing the same characters in different grouping in successive works is something we find not only in Garborg. There is a striking example of this sort of thing in French literature for instance in the novels of Honoré de Balzac, where it is possible to work out a whole biographical dictionary of the characters.

Mannfolk pictures student life, Bohemian life, the relation of the sexes, marriage with or without divorce, the union based on love and which lasts as long as the love lasts. On page 243 of *Mannfolk*⁴⁵ we find the following significant topic of discussion. The scene is a sort of Bohemian dance in Christiania.

" . . . Dei var øl-lentuge⁴⁶ og tala meir um haremchefar; straks etter var dei inni eit ordskeft um, kva som kunde vera verst eller best, fleirgifte med harskikkar, som Tyrken hadde det, eller eingifte med prostitusjon, som det var hjaa os."

We find in the book intensely sensuous and powerful descriptions (p. 244), and an astonishing amount of striking Biblical quotations brought in at most appropriate but unexpected moments.

⁴⁵ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. I.

⁴⁶ Ale-witty.

“Hovude laag og kvilte paa bunken av dei høge aksline ‘som Johannes den Døbers hoved paa et fad.’” (p. 250) “Og tyrst var han som den rike mannen i helvite. . . . Bjølsvik banna⁴⁷ den dagen han var fødd.” (p. 240) The last part of the second quotation refers of course to Job.

The religious element is treated in connection with Daniel Braut, the chief character from *Bondestudentar*. Braut is now married to the *proprietor's* daughter. His wife brought him no money, for her father went into bankruptcy shortly after the marriage—and it was solely for money that he married her. Braut cannot understand why the Lord should “permit him to be fooled thus.” We also learn that Braut, the theological student and future pastor, has had his share of illicit relations. But by this time he hides carefully such phases of his past life, under the religious cloak and mask. His idea of religion is wholly utilitarian, materialistic: it is an arrangement by means of which we may get material blessings here on earth and salvation in the next life. He has not the conception of religion as something which ennobles, beautifies human life, something which helps us to a deeper view of the world; helps us to a nobler faith, a firmer hope, and a larger charity. Garborg is picturing in Braut the religious conceptions of not a few people in all lands.

But the main discussion and treatment in the book is not the religious problem but rather “free love” and the relation of the sexes in general.⁴⁸ We find utterances such as these, which are well calculated to arouse questions in the mind of the thoughtful reader.

“Kva er det for ein slavehandlartanke: binde seg til eit anna menneskje for livstid? I alle opplyste land var der ei lov som sagde, at dersom det eine menneskje gav eller selde seg til det andre, so skulde den transaksjonen vera ugild; men ægteskape var ein slik transaksjon. Det gjekk ikkje for seg aa gjera kontrakt um kjenslur og viljar, og det var tull aa leggje politiband paa ei naturmagt.” (p. 307)

The problem is: what shall the young people do who by natural necessity love and who may not have the means to marry? The moralist will answer: Remain chaste! That would, of course, be a splendid solution of it, if people would only do so—or could do

⁴⁷ *forbanna*, ‘cursed.’

⁴⁸ It may be of interest to note that Garborg published in 1888 a 99-page pamphlet on *Fri Skilsmisse*.

so. But behold any big city—London, Paris, Berlin, New York, Christiania—and the facts are these: all of the young people do not remain chaste in spite of good intentions on their part and all the efforts of the moralists. Nature is constantly with us, but marriage must be deferred longer and longer on account of the heavy expenses connected with a household. One way out of the difficulty is to set up illicit relations; the two lovers live together as long as their love lasts. Julie Linder and Mr. Jonathan in *Mannfolk* try this arrangement. He expounds to her and preaches to her his ideas on “free love” and emancipation; he tells her how marriage destroys all by bringing to bear on love police regulations and the positive law of the land. She enters the union and feels free and happy—for a time. But soon her womanly nature exerts itself—and woman is always more tradition-bound than man is. She wants a home, she wants her position legitimized, she wants rights and security; she feels that in all these “free” arrangements woman is too much at a disadvantage. Finally Jonathan marries her, that is, the arrangement proved an unstable equilibrium which may lead to the ruin of the woman’s happiness or which must seek in marriage a way to save appearances.

On page 322 Garborg takes up the problem for discussion. “Free love” proves impossible, marriage has its inevitable disillusion, men are brutal and selfish, women too often sell their bodies for social rank or merely for a living. He points out how much the new “arrangement” has in it of suffering for the women and opportunities for selfishness on the part of the men. Women have not independence enough to live in these relations. Jonathan, when he has decided to marry his young, beautiful mistress, says (p. 363) that

“han elska henne; han kunde ikkje sleppa henne; men ho klara det ikkje lenger paa den andre maaten; ho maatte og vilde ha prestebrev; fekk ho det ikkje av honom tok ho det av ein annan, ein som ho ikkje brydde seg um. Han kunde ikkje segja stort um det. Kvinna var ikkje menneskje; ho var samfund. Flokk; samvit; motejournal. Var ho ikkje klædd etter motejournalen so kjende ho seg simpel; og elska ho utan politibrev, so kjende ho seg urein, og vart urein. Mot den aalmenne meining kunde ho ikkje klara seg. Ho maatte ha korsett, Korsett paa sjæli som paa kroppen.”

Kruse, the “hero” of the book, enters into relations with the housemaid at the home of Braut. A child is born in misery and squalor far out in the slums of Christiania. The suffering—physi-

cal and spiritual—of the poor mother and the suffering and death of the poor, little child are told with singular power and pathos. (Pp. 372-86.) Those pages are unmatched in our literature and are worthy of a place in *Les Misérables*. If anything purifies from selfish passion, such a description does; it is no wonder that the Norwegian government did not confiscate the book in spite of the ultra-realism of it.

I mentioned realism. We are now in the most realistic and naturalistic period of Garborg's literary activity. There is a somewhat bitter spirit of irony and disillusion apparent in *Mannfolk*. Garborg is one of those people who cannot live mainly "objectively," but who analyze life rather than take it as it comes. And life disappoints him. A partial explanation is offered in the religion of other-worldliness, which he was instructed in when young. He was given thought-forms which larger experience tends to repudiate; he was inspired with hopes which life cannot fulfil; and morals were taught him on a basis which sincere thought and intellectual probity are often forced to reject.

6. The next book, *Hjaa ho mor*, Bergen, 1890, is one of Garborg's most powerful studies. It is not always interesting reading, if we mean by "interesting" something which contains abundant plot, action, intrigue, hair-raising situations, and melo-dramatic climaxes. The book is a skillful depicting—in the case of a girl—of the external life and mental effects and reflexes of that external life. Her childhood, girlhood, and womanhood are minutely treated. The book produces a powerful impression, and we get to know the main character thoroughly.

Fru Holmsen is a divorced woman; Holmsen is an inebriate and a general degenerate. Fru Holmsen is in extreme poverty, tries to work for herself and children, and is practically forced to sell her body for money. She is also forced through poverty to let her two oldest children live on charity in the house of her former husband's mistress. And in such surroundings Fanny Holmsen, the main character of the story, grows up. Fanny tries to remain pure in spite of all. She has the respect for herself that a woman ought to have and which—if women had more of it or had it more generally—would help to purify the life in our larger cities. She will not do anything which will lower her self-respect. Tempta-

tions are put in her way. Employers try to corrupt her—and she leaves the service. She tries to get instruction by self-study. Disillusions here and elsewhere. A rich, old, ugly custom-house official wants to marry her. She does not love him and will not marry him merely for money. Her mother urges her to accept him. She will not sell herself for riches. Gabriel Gram, who has already appeared in *Mannfolk* and with whom we are to get thoroughly acquainted in *Trøtte Mænd*—comes into her life. He loves her in a way; she loves him sincerely. He is “emancipated” and will not marry her; so he offers to make her his mistress. Then, after a violent sickness, she accepts the ugly old “publican,” the custom house official. She makes him promise to give her a trip to Italy—and she finds some consolation in the thought that she may jump from the deck of the steamer and thus end it all. But she has not the courage to commit suicide. She returns from Italy, pale, hopeless, suffering. She seeks refuge from the world in religion.

The book is a powerful psychological study and shows a profound knowledge of human nature. It is thoroughly realistic—could scarcely be more so. We find the *bête humaine* deep in the mire. Various social problems and political questions are touched upon in passing.

7. The next book, *Trøtte Mænd*, Chr., 1891, marks a culmination. It sums up and ends Garborg's most dreadfully realistic period. It stands without a parallel in Norwegian literature. It is the work of a man who has suffered intensely, who has met face to face the issues of life, its conflicting views, and who knows that all is vanity. It is the product of a lyric poet, a keen critic, a merciless satirist, a man of incorruptible intellectual probity. Such things as are treated in this book cannot be wholly imagined such things must have been lived—at least in part—by the man who writes them. Garborg treats here such matters as the loss of the commonly accepted values, the meaninglessness of existence, the inability of the senses to satisfy us, the silence of philosophy where we would most like to know, the inability of beauty to give us abiding satisfaction, the hopelessness and inefficiency of dissipation to “drown our sorrows.” We cannot find abiding peace and satisfaction in the physical, ethical, and esthetic way. Can

we find it in the religious? Now let us consider the book more in detail.

The book purports to be the diary of Gabriel Gram, a character which appears in *Mannfolk* and *Hjaa ho mor* in minor roles but who now is the central figure. It is a *journal intime*, and, indeed, leaves nothing unsaid. Gram is a highly composite nature, one of those born to sorrow. He cannot be with the saints and he cannot live at ease among those who sin a little, love a little, go to church a little, repent a little—live their humdrum lives with a fair amount of content,—but who form after all the strength and backbone of a nation. He has not the power to identify himself with some movement, illusion, reform, anything you like; something that can bridge over the pits and chasms of existence and tide us over into eternity. Gram reflects and gathers up in his soul the conflicting elements and cultural currents of modern life, without possessing the power to reduce them to anything like unity. His life and happiness are ground between the upper and nether millstones.

Trætte Mænd is the modern counterpart of Ecclesiastes. Indeed Garborg refers somewhere to this celebrated ancient composition as something so thoroughly modern that no modern writer could do it better. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" may be taken as the motto of *Trætte Mænd*. There is no plot to speak of: a series of monologues, dialogues, psychological analyses—that is all. And all is expressed with a striking adequateness of language, ranging from lyric beauty to the most grim, closely-knit reasoning and the keenest thrusts of satire. It is impossible to give an orderly resumé of the book. There is little of order and plan; it is a succession of moods and fancies, hopes and fever-dreams. All I can do is to give some excerpts, which will sufficiently show the spirit of the work. The characters are for the most part old acquaintances from the books which we have already considered. The main female character is Fanny Holmsen from *Hjaa ho mor*.

"Ja, ja; vi er flinke, vi menneskebørn. Vore nødvendigheder og indskrænktheder digter vi om til dyder og er kry af dem. Som vi omgjør slægtopholdelsesdrift til 'kærlighed,' saaledes blir den brutale omstændighed, at vi er vanedyr og legemlig-aandeligt bundne til et bestemt milieu, omfantaseret til en saa poetisk illusion som 'fædrelandskærlighed.'

"Komisk ide: 'elske' et stykke geografi! 'Elske' 5800 kvadratmile!"⁴⁰
So much for patriotism.

⁴⁰ *Trætte Mænd*. *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. III, p. 37.

Dr. Kvaale speaks:

"Kvinden er slægtvæsenet par excellence, ved jeg. Det er ganske naturligt. Monandriet er noget satanstøi."⁶⁰

Gram, in talking about one of his former lively companions who is now metamorphosed into a sedate and contented minister of the gospel, says:

"Han er ganske sikkert lykkeligere end jeg. Men jeg er ikke paa nogen maade istand til at misunde ham. Det er til syvende og sidst ikke lykken, vi søger; det er noget andet, noget højere."⁶¹

Here we meet the thought that the important question is not *are we happy?* but rather *have we a right to be happy under the circumstances?*

Georg Jonathan, one of the characters in the book, is rather much of a sinner, but he does not go to ruin because he lives so much "objectively." Not so with Gabriel Gram.

Gram: "De er lykkelig De med all Deres interesser."

Georg Jonathan: "Vil man leve, maa man leve udadvendt. Den sunde vilje er altid udadvendt, og uden en sund vilje (skuldretræk)—gaar man enten i sjøen eller til presten."⁶²

Let us remember that Georg Jonathan is half English and hence represents most beautifully the Anglo-American ideals of materialistic well-being.

Gram has this to say about woman's suffrage and feminism in general:

"Nei, nei; men sagen er, at hverken staten eller andre arbejdsherrer kan være tjente med funktionærer, som, ret som det er, maa ha ni maaneders permission. . . ." (p. 84)

Gram is tired of the blatant scientific positivism:

"Hele sagen er vel at man begynder at bli lidt træt af disse evindelige hestekræfter." (p. 105)

We find that some critics say that Gram merely plays with religion, that he merely seeks in it a stimulant for his jaded senses that his life is merely emotion-hunting. But, no. It is the sincere, longing of the prodigal son for the house of his father (problem treated at length in *Den burikomne faderen*). When one is out in the struggles and the turmoil of life, one longs back to the peace and security of one's childhood religion. But if one cannot accept the foundation—the creed—on which the church has reared its

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶² *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. III, p. 77.

structure, one cannot make into anything permanent the calm which the church gives to the believers. Every day—while on his visit to the country—Gram walks over to the old church—the church so rich in childhood memories and sacred associations.

“Selv en gammel garvet rationalist som jeg blir ordentlig rørt. ‘Kom hid til mig, og jeg vil give dig hvile,’ siger den gamle, tjærebrædde bondekirke til mig; og jeg kommer, og finder hvile. . . . Ind i kirken gaar jeg forresten ikke. Man har restaareret den.” (p. 142)

What have philosophy and science to offer us? what answers to give to the most burning questions?

“Er der en Gud?—‘Vi ved ikke.’—Er der en sjæl?—‘Vi ved ikke.’—skal vi leve eller dø?—‘Vi ved ikke.’—Hvorfor eksisterer vi?—‘Vi ved ikke.’—Eksisterer jeg i det hele taget?—‘Vi ved ikke.’—Hvad ved vi da egentlig?—‘Vi ved ikke.’—Kan man i det hele taget vide noget?—‘Vi ved ikke.’ Dette systematiske *Vi-ved-ikke* kaldes videnskab. Og menneskene slaar hænderne sammen af beundring og jubler: Menneskehedens fremskridt er ufattelige og ubegribelige; herefter behøver vi hverken tro eller guder mere.” (p. 150)

Now and then Gram longs for religion, not for the material prosperity which religion might help him to obtain, but for its eternal values and its vindication of the best in life.

“Gud hvor jeg misunder denne prestemand. Tænk, have noget der er helligt . . . noget som man har religion for; noget som har værd, som har varighed, som bestaar; noget som man kan hvile ved og bygge paa, holde sig til under all omstændigheder . . . En fred som verden ikke kan tage; en skat som møl og rust ikke fortærer.” (p. 197)

Now suppose we ask what art can do for us, what lasting satisfaction the esthetic side of things can furnish us.

“Kunsten,’ ‘kunsten’; hvad er til syvende og sidst kunsten? En lækkerbidsken mere for den som har appetit, og en spot mere for den livstrætte. Michelangelo, Dante, Beethoven—er meget store. Men ingen af dem har hjælp for en sjæl som er i nød.” (p. 201)

What consolation may we find in the thought that the world is growing more democratic? We get an answer like that given by Nietzsche.

“‘Fremtiden’ er en fæl forestilling. Fabrikker og velstaaende arbejdere. Verden fuld af oplyste, velnærede smaaborgersjæle, som spiser, drikker og forplanter sig videnskabeligt. Jeg vil ikke være med. Jeg vil simpelthen ikke.” (p. 222)

What then? Shall we seek consolation in the thought of death, in the thought of total extinction of our individual being? Shall we renounce life? And can we find comfort in such a system as that of Buddha?

“Buddhismen er ikke noget for mig. Jeg stikker i barbarisme til over

ørene. Dette med forsagelsen er mig for negativt: mit væsen tørster efter tilfredsstillelse, lykke, kærlighed." (p. 224)

When most tortured Gram goes at times to a Catholic church and listens to the playing of the organ, smells the incense, contemplates the images; and in the religious seclusion of the church finds a sort of peace. (Garborg himself has tried this method several times.)

Now and then Gram turns violently against the critics who have destroyed the possibility of faith.

"Forbandet være kritiken som har optæret troens rygmarv i os, og videnskaben der med frække experimentatorfingre tilsøler og tilsmudser alt hvad der skulde være helligt og urørligt. Længe formaaede Mefisto intet mod Guds folk. Da forklædte han sig som videnskab og fik adgang til det helligste. Og se,—pludselig var det slukt, det lille fredelige, hellige lysblink fra Bethlehem." (p. 230) "Den positivistiske skepticisme har ædt paa min sjæl som en syre, indtil selve troesevnen er gaaet tabt." (p. 240)

What remains then for Gram or many a modern man in similar straits? "Vanvidet eller Kristus" (p. 242).

Gram now begins to frequent the church, drawn by its promise of peace, its sincerity, its orderly system, in which the good old words *faith*, *hope*, and *charity* are full of meaning. Gram's case is not a "conversion" by *principles*, it is the toddling homeward of a tired child. What Gram values most in the Church is its order and placid calm, its ideals and working-hope, its faith in good and in progress.

The last quotation which I shall give from *Trætte Mænd* will explain not only Gram's troubles but also those of Garborg and other Norwegian writers of the second half of the 19th century.

"Den egentlige aarsag til de mange nervelidelser i vor tid er den, at livsanskuelsen er i uorden. Et menneske mister—lad os sige Gud; dermed har sjælelivet mistet sit centrum; sjælelivet er blit uden regulator, om jeg saa maa sige, og begynder at styrte afsted i krampagtig vild flugt, uden maal og maade. Og ret som det er springer fjæren." (p.238)

It goes without saying that Garborg must not be held personally responsible for all that is said in this book. But we may say—as we know from other sources—that he has passed through much the same experiences as Gram has. The main character of the book is represented as somewhat given to alcoholic escape from sorrow. Some critics have made much of this fact, and endeavor to reduce the whole book to a disjointed, panoramic account of a mind diseased from bodily excesses of various kinds. But there

is scarcely anything in the book that a sincere thinker, a sensitive person, starting out with Garborg's home conditions and early bringing up, could not come in contact with and experience along the path to culture. We need not consider anything in the book as due to a misuse of the body but rather as owing to an excessive use of the mind on problems which cannot be solved. The book is the work of a man who is somewhat given to self-analysis and who studies life rather than lives it. The book is extremely valuable for the understanding of Garborg's inner life, for the understanding of Norwegian cultural life in the period treated, as well as for the insight it gives into human nature in general. It is the product of a man who has the best stocked mind in Norway.

8. In *Fred* (Bergen, 1892) Garborg returns in earnest to the religious problem of his home-district in Western Norway. He left Gabriel Gram in the arms of the church. What abiding peace and consolation did Gram find there? The next book must not be looked upon as a more or less direct answer. The main characters are so different. Gram suffered from over-culture. Not so Enok Haave, who is a peasant from Western Norway. Enok is imbued with narrow, Puritanical ideas. His great problem is how to find peace. What Gram seeks in ethics, esthetics, art, science, philosophy, religion, Enok tries, to find in religion alone. Hence a greater unity of treatment, more concentration and power in the story. *Fred* is Garborg's more gripping work, a masterpiece which in its kind is not excelled in any of the literatures which I am acquainted with. It treats partly the same problem as Ibsen has treated in *Brand*, but whereas Ibsen goes into allegory and the cloudlands of symbolism, Garborg remains firmly on earth and treats a great spiritual problem in realistic terms of absolute truthfulness and verisimilitude and of singular intensity. The language rises ever and anon to poetic beauty of the highest order; lyric passages abound.

The painting of the chief character, Enok Haave, is based in part on Garborg's own father, who committed suicide mainly through religious difficulties, and is also based on various experiences out of Garborg's own life, as Garborg himself avers in *Knudahi-brev*, page 4. The following quotation gives us the social milieu.

"Det er eit sterkt, tungt folk, som grev seg gjennom live med gruvling og slit

putlar med jordi og granskar skrifti, piner korn av auren og von av sine draumar, trur paa skillingen og trøystar seg til Gud."⁵³

A truer characterization of the people from Garborg's part of Norway has never been given.

Enok Haave feels keenly the conviction of sin and guilt. What must he do to be saved? Go to God. He endeavors to fulfil literally all the requirements of the law. He prays for the voice of God to speak in his heart so that he may know that he has found perfect salvation and has entered into communion with God. He goes into the external extremes of the religious life: wears old clothes, forbids the use of coffee, forbids all kinds of amusements, and on Sundays keeps the children for hours and hours to hear the "text" read.⁵⁴

He antagonizes his family, loses the love and confidence of his children. He begins to take into his house all manner of waifs and gypsies because he feels such conduct to be the will of God. His waifs and befriended people turn out bad. This leads to doubts and misgivings in his mind. He has ill luck on the farm. He begins to doubt whether he is "saved," since the hand of the Lord seems lifted against him. He grows stricter than ever; examines himself; mortifies the flesh—and makes himself intolerable to everybody. He quotes the text which every West Norwegian has heard quoted so often: *Jesus græd*. That text is taken to mean: We must not be jubilant, we must not amuse ourselves; but in a spirit of gravity and grim earnestness consider our sinful condition, and ever have before us the thought of our latter end.

Enok Haave doubts more and more that he is saved, as he cannot fulfil the requirements of the law, and cannot surmount the weaknesses of the flesh. Little by little he is obsessed by the idea that he has committed "the unpardonable sin," that there is no hope for him. He goes to the minister for consolation. That helps a little. But soon the clouds thicken again. He begins to entertain ideas of suicide. He prays God to help him, to keep him from a death which in the Lutheran creed means eternal perdition. He

⁵³ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. IV, p. 4.

⁵⁴ *Lesat teksten* means the reading of a long printed sermon, with singing of gospel hymns before and after. This religious exercise took up a large part of the Sunday afternoon—just the time when the children longed to be out playing.

grows more and more despondent. He seeks human sympathy, but his wife is unable to help him and his children are afraid of him or look upon him as an oppressor. When he is in the house, all is quiet; when he is away, every one is joyous and happy. He suffers keenly, hungers for righteousness and peace and affection. The gypsy boy whom he has befriended and brought up in the fear of God, returns to the old homestead to steal Enok's family silver. His oldest boy, Gunnar, goes to Stavanger to work in a store. Gunnar, the oldest son and chief hope of Enok—whom the father has kept most strictly in the path of righteousness—ruins a girl and escapes to America. That blow is too much for Enok. Enok fancies he sees the hand of God in it all; he feels he is lost. Why live longer when hell awaits him anyway? His mind breaks down under the strain; and the peace that he has sought so long he finds—on the bottom of a lake.

The book does not aim to show that "peace" cannot be found in the religious way—in the old gospel way—for examples of this phenomenon may be seen every day. It simply tells us that if one seeks peace by such an extreme acceptance of the Christian religion, one is doomed to failure. But, it is not necessary to generalize the situation in *Fred*. It presents an individual study, a perfectly true and possible character in the person of Enok Haave, whatever larger meaning he may have as a "type." Indirectly the book shows us what sufferings the narrow religious teaching causes in a sincere and earnest mind. Life in such a system of religion is narrowed down to impossible and intolerable limits. The "Flesh" is mortified to the point of reacting violently in some way. Human nature is cramped beyond endurance; and the instincts and vital forces take their revenge by leading the person in question into insanity or moral lawlessness. The first happens in the case of Enok; the second, in the case of his oldest son.

9. In *Læraren* (Christiania, 1896), one of Garborg's two plays, we meet Paulus Haave, son of Enok Haave. He has studied theology, has tried extensive revival work; but in due time he comes to the conclusion that we must, to be true Christians, live up to the teachings of Christ.⁵⁵ Paulus decides to sell his farm—all his property

⁵⁵ We have here somewhat the same problem as is treated in the *Resurrection of Tolstoi*.

in fact—and to give the money to the poor and needy. People impute to him the lowest motives; that he is seeking notoriety, popularity, for the coming election for the *Storthing*. His wife suspects him of loving another woman, and surprises them together at a moment when he is advising that very woman to marry a certain young man of the neighborhood. The wife commits suicide. The innocent Paulus Haave is arrested and taken to court to be tried on circumstantial evidence. With that the play ends.

Paulus Haave is fully as devout as his father, Enok Haave—the main character in *Fred*, but whereas the father lacked inner harmony and so went to ruin, the son—much stronger and surer of himself—loses to be sure his “external” happiness, but retains his inner harmony and self-respect. His life in the community is ruined; but he rises above mere externals because his character is strong and unified.⁵⁶

10. The next book is *Den burtkomne faderen* (Christiania, 1899). It continues the religious problems. We meet Gunnar Haave, the oldest son of Enok Haave, whose escapades in the city—Stavanger of course—had so much to do with the suicide of Enok in *Fred*. The prodigal son has been abroad in the world, lived the life of a prodigal, tried much, suffered much, and at last has longed to return home. But when he returns home, the father is nowhere to be found. Here is meant of course, the heavenly father, as in the parable in the Bible.

“Eg hadde livt som den burtkomne sonen og var som han komin i naud; men daa eg som han søkte heim att, var faderen burte.”⁵⁷

He sought God among the sages, among the saints, and within himself, but found him not.

The book breathes a spirit of sincere resignation, of longing for God and peace. All the bitterness and irony which we found in

⁵⁶ While, of course, the religious questions predominate in *Læraren*, another question of sufficient importance is touched upon. Daniel Braut in *Bondestudentar* went to town, became ashamed of his peasant origin, and aped “formal culture” to the best of his ability; Jens Eide, the Sheriff in *Læraren*, assimilates what is good and useful in city culture, and returns serenely to his own glen to live and labor among his people (*Skrifter i Samling*. Vol. IV, pp. 229-30). We are now entering upon Garborg’s period of “home-comings”—back to the simple life, back to nature, and, as far as possible, back to God.

⁵⁷ *Skrifter i Samling*. Vol. IV, p. 337.

Trætte Mænd and *Fred* is absent here. The book is written in a style that for lyric beauty is well-nigh unmatched in Norwegian.

Gunnar seeks the home of his childhood. Memories which console even while they sadden come to him out of the long ago. The little peasant church draws him; but he does not enter—the illusion would be destroyed. He visits the grave of his mother; he looks in vain for the grave where his father lies buried, for no monument must mark the grave of one who has taken his own life. Much of what is here given in the form of fiction is taken out of Garborg's own life, as we see by comparing the account here given with that in *Knudahei-brev*.

If we compare this book with the earlier ones, we find here a greater disposition to let alone the impossible problems and to return to a more calm acceptance of the inevitable; we find a return to a sincere endeavor along humanly possible lines. We find the same review of the world's vanities as we found in *Trætte Mænd*, but not presented in the same spirit. The man who has tried many vain forms of satisfaction now returns to the sincere, simple life of the peasant.

We meet the problem of how much place one ought to give to the critical, analyzing side of man's nature as against faith and a following of the "heart" and feelings. No definite answer is given, but *reason* is not emphasized so much as heretofore. Further questions are: What is there of abiding value in life? Do those who seek "happiness" find what they seek? Are heaven and hell something distant or something which belongs to this life, in short, something within us? Must we not accept life as a postulate and by sane *living* find what happiness there is for us?

Gunnar longs for God, for he is so lonesome at times.

"Gjev eg hadde ein aa beda til um nætane."⁵⁸

He has lived his life in much endeavor, selfishness, and hardness of heart—no more hardness of heart than most people have; only he analyzed himself more—but all appears vanity to him now. What cruelty in the world! That one should eat the other is the law of nature. This bloody succession down through the ages and eons some people ball eternal life. The thouget is so horrible that Gunnar exclaims:

"Hjelp! Aa kvi ropar eg paa hjelp, naar der ingen er som høyrer?"⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. IV, p. 354.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

But have we not given too much place to philosophy and “reason”?

“Du veit kva den skeptiske filosofi segjer, den gamle visdom som alltid vert ny: tankjen kan skilja sund og løyse upp; berre live kan byggje og skapa.”⁶⁰

But suppose we seek to realize perfection here on earth, what then? A few short years and inevitable decay sets in. Yet let us live for others and seek their happiness.

There are beautiful bits of wisdom in this remarkable work, suggestive fragments of a philosophy of life. Let us not ask for unity; there is none—can be none. Garborg has given us the different moods, agonies, flashes of hope, and quiet resignation of an old man. There is apparent a deep longing for permanent values, for righteousness, for God; there is also a perfect willingness to do the commands of God, if God would only show himself clearly and unmistakably to his children. The fatherhood of God is a beautiful idea, but we are forced, for lack of evidence, to abandon it; let us cling then to the idea of the brotherhood of man as our working-ideal and working-faith. Such seems to be the positive teaching of the book.

11. I shall next take up *Heimkomin Son* (Christiania, 1908). This book is more positive and constructive than any of the books which we have considered so far. Garborg has won his way back to peace and to a larger, serener love of life. There is incidentally some preaching in the book, on the whole of a useful and practical nature. There is a plea for showing honor and respect toward one's parents, for respect for the family; a plea for a school that shall teach children to honor father and mother and native land, a school which shall not be instrumental in making the young people leave the farm to go to the cities or to America.

The main part of the book deals with Paulus Haave. It will be remembered that he is a son of Enok Haave and that he figured in *Læraren*. Paulus was exonerated from all charges relative to the death of his wife. He has become a sort of beneficent saint in the neighborhood. The sorrow which he has encountered in life has not soured his character, but has made him more oblivious of his own self and more sympathetic with others.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 381. We have here the attitude of Pascal and Rousseau.

He has thought much about many things; in *Heimkomin Son* we have the result of these thoughts and experiences. Paulus cares little for the dogmas of the church, but he cares much for the teachings of Christ. One of the friends of Paulus says about his views on theology:

“‘Me skal ikkje vera teologar,’ segjer han; ‘me skal fylgje meistaren.’ Men han vedgjeng, at eit grand rudgjing kan turvast her og der; for ‘mangt kan bli ug Reidt, naar meistaren vert tolka etter sveinane og ikkje sveinane etter meistaren.’”⁶¹

He has the same reverence for the Sermon on the Mount that Tolstoy has.

“Ofte les han upp stykke or Bergpreika utan tolking; ‘her finn me Gudsorde reint og klaart.’”⁶²

And the following may be quoted on the necessity of having respect for one’s parents and for people in general.

“Langt liv kan berre det folk vente, som held uppe vurnaden for far og mor, og vurnaden for det aa vera far og mor: vurnaden for live og livsvokstren. Sæle dei folki som ikkje fær for mykje byar.”⁶³

We should rejoice in the beauty which has been bestowed upon flowers and human beings:

“Men det fagre er paradis-minninger som me ikkje skal drive fraa oss; og gudsdyrking er det aa gleda seg i guds verk.”⁶⁴

We must not send the country boys to the city, but prepare them for useful work at home. Norway must get political independence. Swedes and “Home-Danes”—Riksmal people—fight over the land, while the young people leave for America.

Certain elements in religion must fall: the trinity, for instance.⁶⁵

We must have something to do in life to get meaning into life.

“Men var det ein som ikkje kunde hjelpe og tena — han fann ikkje meining i sit liv, um han so rota seg igjennom alle filosofiar.”⁶⁶

That is, in disinterested helpfulness and service lies the secret of happiness.

What do we know about the ultimate problems and values?

“Det me veit er, at som det er laga, so er det. Me kjenner den Verdi me hev og nyttar det live me fekk; naar me nyttar det rett, far det meining for seg; for resten syter grunnherren, faderen.”⁶⁷

⁶¹ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. IV, p. 421.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 423.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 442.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 462.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 477.

The following quotation sums up the main idea of the book:

“Me skal vera gode med kvarandre, so vil gud vera god med oss. Og no veit eg, at i dei barnslege ordi ligg heile kristendomen. For det er born me skal vera. Ikkje gruvle; taka kvar morgon paa med livsens leik og vera med i den; og gjera kvar sitt til at leiken kan bli god; daa vert dagane heller for stutte enn for lange. Og innhald vert der i den aalvorsame leik.”⁶⁸

12. We shall now consider a book and a pamphlet in which Garborg treats the religious problem out and out, not in the form of fiction but openly and in the first person. The book is *Jesus Messias* (Christiania, 1906), and the pamphlet is *Den burtkomne Messias* (Christiania, 1907). He tells us in the Introduction to *Jesus Messias* that so much tradition and so many dogmas have grown up about Christ that it is hard to get a clear idea of what he really was. One must therefore go back to the source, that is, go back to the New Testament, and read without any special theological bias, in order to get to the real Christ.

“Men det er vandt aa lesa i den boki naar ein fysst hev gjengi i skule hjaaa dei kunnige. Eg laut hjelpe til med pennen: skrive upp det eg las; og langt um lengi tok det til aa gry for meg; eg fekk samanheng i det som i fygstningi ser so raadlaust ut for ein kristeleg opplærd: Messias-sogo.

“Her legg eg daa denne sogo fram som eg no ser ho; kannhende kunde eg paa den maaten arge ein og annan so vidt upp, at han tok til aa lesa i bibelen. Og det kynde han hava godt av. For ein kann segja kva ein vil: me er enno ikkje ferduge med bibelen.”⁶⁹

Jesus Messias is an examination of the New Testament and especially of the four gospels. It is a plea for independent work in the Bible, aside from what interpretations the theological professors and the established church may have put upon the various parts of the Christian religion. The results reached are essentially that Christ was a great teacher, a great leader, an inspiring person, but not divine in the usual sense of the word. The book was a severe disappointment to religious people; they had hoped that Garborg was on the way to becoming “converted.”

Den burtkomne Messias is a forty-six page pamphlet in which Garborg answers some criticisms passed upon *Jesus Messias*. A few quotations from this pamphlet will be in place.

“Det er soleis sant, at eg hjaaa Jesus finn svar paa (det etiske) livsspursmaale; etter ymis leiting i aust og vest lyt eg tilstaa, at so vidt som eg kann sjaa er Jesu livslære den einaste som—i alle tilfelle—gjev innhald, ‘meining’ i live vaart.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 478.

⁶⁹ *Jesus Messias*. Introduction.

“Spursmaale um ‘meining i tilvære’ er det verre med.”⁷⁰

“Den heidningkyrkjelege umdiktning [How Christ the *man* became *God*] av Jesus fraa Nasaret er baade historisk og psykologisk umogeleg; det hev eg i *Jesus Messias* paavist etter bibelen (som lesin utan teologbrillur tydeleg viser det), og etter kyrkjjesogo, som hev det avgjerande aastale 325.”⁷¹

“I staden for aa høyre etter kva Jesus sagde, hev verdi no i snart tvo tusund aar trætta med seg sjølv um kven Jesus var; og i staden for Jesu lære hev me fengi læra um Jesus.”⁷²

It is necessary to counteract the influence of the official State Church from time to time:

“at ein ikkje læt folke staa altfor verjelaust mot *rabies theologorum*, som med si ugudelege helviltære fyller galnehus og sjølvdraap-listur meir enn forsvarlegt er, serleg hjaa oss, der folke bur einslegt og spreidt, og dertil er aalvorsamt av natur, so at altfor mange kjem innpaa gruvling og tunge tankar.”⁷³

Garborg says about the plan and purpose of *Jesus Messias*:

“Min bog er *historisk*; dens formaal er at fremstille den israelitiske messias-tanke, saaledes som denne ifølge evangelierne træder frem gennem Jesus fra Nazareth.”⁷⁴

Garborg was told that in *Jesus Messias* he had not given the complete Christ. He answers:

“Men nu var det tilfældigvis den evangeliske [not the “kirkelige”] Jesus og kun ham, jeg vilde have frem.”⁷⁵

“Den bibelske Jesus er etter kyrkjjetruu ikkje so mykje som ‘ein halv Jesus’; den Kristus, kyrkja hev bygt seg, er ei triening: den evangeliske Messias plus den paulinske sonaren plus den heidning-kyrkjelege gud.”⁷⁶

What is the origin—complete origin—of our Christian Church?

“Men den heile sanning kjem ikkje fram, fyrr det vert sagt beint ut, at den heidning-kristelege kyrkja er bygd paa det berge som heiter Paulus. Og det maa ikkje verte gløymt, at i Nikæa og i Konstantinopel, der vart taarni til den kyrkja reiste.”⁷⁷

With the following two quotations I shall leave *Den burtkomne Messias*.

“Enno er helvite grunnen under protestant-kyrkja. Og som Messias i Rom kom burt attum pavestolen, soleis kom han i Nordlandi burt altum preste-kjolar og bokskaa.”⁷⁸

⁷⁰ *Den burtkomne Messias*, p. 1.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

“Den sanne Messias talar gjennom den gløymde bibelen enno det orde som hev magt til aa frelse verdi: du skal elske, unne, din næste som du elskar, unner, deg sjølv. Kjem verdi nokon gong so langt at ho kann høyre og skyna dette frelsarorde?”⁷⁹

13. I shall now discuss briefly two books, published at different times, but which really form one continuous work. These are *Haugtussa* (Christiania, 1895) and *I Helheim* (1901). *Haugtussa* is one of the most strikingly original things in Norwegian literature. Garborg is, as we have seen, a merciless realist, a keen critic, a man of action, and at the same time a lyric poet and a dreamer. How can these seemingly incompatible elements be combined in one and the same person? In the first place let us make allowance for *genius*, which escapes all formulas and classifications, that spark of something which makes the superior person what he is. Then what remains? The environment—physical and cultural. Garborg was driven into realism by his strong feeling for genuine values and by his intellectual probity; but he did not feel at ease, feel at home in the midst of realism. Flaubert in *Madame Bovary* did what Garborg has done in several of his works; but as Flaubert wrote *la Tentation de saint Antoine* so Garborg wrote *Haugtussa* and *I Helheim* to escape from the cruel prosiness of life. Where did Garborg get his imagery from, his fairy-lore, and the material for these books? In the western part of Norway the people have a vague belief in all sorts of fairies and hobgoblins. The language in these districts reflects this state of mind. In a certain West-Norwegian dialect *byting*—changeling—means an ugly person. Why? Because it was thought that the trolls would exchange their ugly children for human children. Again it was said that a person who acted peculiarly was *haugteken*. Why? Because those who were taken into the mountains by the trolls, and ever got out again, would, it was thought, be half-witted. People in a way believed the mountains to be inhabited by trolls. These trolls used to capture people outright or persuade them to come to them into the mountains. Once there they would be offered the drink of oblivion. It was held that the ringing of church bells would free the people thus physically and mentally imprisoned. Again it was believed—and really believed—that people had the gift of second sight. I once had a personal experience of this. A man from one of the farms neighboring to my father’s was

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

supposed to have this faculty, and many stories were told of how he saw trolls, devils, and spirits of all sorts. Compare in this connection *Den Fremsynle* of Jonas Lie and *Vise Knut*.⁸⁰ Again people held that to remove a piece of a cross from a churchyard and to burn it in a certain house would make that house haunted by the ghost of the person over whose grave the cross stood. People used the word *feig* (Scotch: *fey*) in the sense that the person to which the word was applied was shortly to die; and such a person's queer actions were called *feigdafure*. If one dreamed of little children, it was held that one would hear of someone's death (*spørja døande*). Shortly before one's death, people might hear singing as of funeral hymns or pounding as of driving nails into the coffin; this was called *førefær*. All these ideas are current in the present writer's native district of Tynes in Western Norway. Space forbids me to give more, but I hope enough has been said to show that Garborg did not "invent" outright the main elements, the cultural background of *Haugtussa* and *I Helheim*. Garborg illustrates in these art products a point which deserves mention, namely that it is not necessary for a genius to go far afield for his material, but merely to carry into artistic form the common property of the nation or the particular region.

Garborg has studied spiritism. He wrote a series of articles on this subject in *Samtiden* of the year 1893. He shows himself thoroughly acquainted with this form of thought. But we need not suppose that the books which we are to consider here grew, in any way, out of his spiritualistic studies. The imagery in *Haugtussa* and in *I Helheim* seems as "natural" and "possible" to a West Norwegian as does the imagery in Hauptmann's *Sunken Bell* to a German.

Haugtussa is a series of poems in various forms. Some have a form resembling that of the ballad, with repetitions of certain lines and a regularly recurring refrain:

"Gjentunn' breider der Gutann' slær;
so ropar dei til kvarandre og lær.
—Me veit, naar det er so laga—.

"Ja lett det gjeng med Lentur og Fjas
paa Vollen der i det fallne Gras.
—Me veit, naar det er so laga—.

⁸⁰ For an interesting account of the life of Vise Knut see *Knut Rasmussen Nordgarden eller Visknut*, by Johannes Skard, Chr., 1898.

“Og skjemte og fjasa,—lat gaa med det;
det gjer eg kanskje ein Gong, eg med.
—Me veit, naar det er so laga—.”⁸¹

“Du skal ikkje fæle den mjuke Nott,
daa Draumen slær ut sine Vengir
i linnare Ljos enn Dagen hev aatt
og Tonar fraa stillare Strengir.
Det voggar um Lid,
det svævest av Strid,
og Dagen ei kjenner den Sæle-Tid.”⁸²

* * *

“Fram dansar den Haugkall fager og blaa
med Gullring um Haare som fløymer;
han giljar for Veslemøy til og fraa,
Og Tonar ikring honom strøymer.
'Aa hildrande du!
Med meg skal du bu;
i Blaahaugen skal du din Sylvrokk snu.’”⁸³

Others have the form of the alliterative verse of the *Elder Edda*:

“Maal kved Gumle.
um Gamle-Ave.
Daa raadde Risar
Heims-Ringen.
Natti laag
nifs yvi Land.
Inkje Maane.
Inkje Stjernur.
Nordskin braga
um breide Bre.
Dal og Dokk
i Duld drøynde.”⁸⁴

The main character of *Haugtussa* and *I Helheim* is *synsk* (has second-sight), and for that reason she is called *Haugtussa*.⁸⁵

“—Sidan saag ho
i Haug, paa Voll,
baade Nisse og Nøkk,
baade Draug og Troll
og Gasten med Haari lange.

⁸¹ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. V, p. 42.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁸⁵ *Haug*—hill—is the place where the girl lives. *Tussa* may be connected with the words *tusse*, *tuss'n*, *tussa*—hobgoblin, hobgoblins; or with the word *tusete*, which means more or less demented.

“Tidt mullande gjekk ho
med myrke Ord
og Skræmde stundom
si eigi Mor;
dei sa ho vanta paa Vite.

“I Lyngmarki nord
millom Haugar tri,
der gjekk ho gjætte
si meste Tid.
Og Haugtussa vart ho heitand.”⁸⁶

She sees deeper than other people, hence suffers more.

“ ‘Gud trøyste deg daa,
du Veslemøy;
det vore deg betre
du maatte døy,
so fingje du Fred i Jordi!’

“ ‘Aa heller vil eg
med Augo sjaa,
enn dauv og blind
gjenom Verdi gaa
og ikkje det sanne skilja!’ ”⁸⁷

What is gold and glitter to them appears to her in its true nature. She loves, but loses her lover. She is tempted hard by powers of darkness within and without, but wins earth's greatest victory—the victory over one's self. In love and large sympathy she forgives the woman who took from her her lover. She becomes the respected and loved friend of the people in the glen. But before she reaches the stage of clarified vision and noble self-abnegation, she must make her descent into *Helheim*, the realm of the shades (*I Helheim*). This part of the work reminds one of Dante's *Hell* in the *Divine Comedy*. As Dante is accompanied by Virgil, so the Norwegian peasant girl is accompanied by a *volva*, who explains everything. Shall we say that Garborg has imitated Dante? Such an assumption lies near at hand, but let us believe Garborg's own words when he says:

“Enno hev eg ikkje lesi Dante; og dette er berre ikkje skam, men hev og vorti meg til skade; i ‘Helheim’-kvade mitt skal eg ha teki med sumt, som og er med i ‘Guddomssongen,’ segjer bokdomarar.” (Merknad 1904)⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. V, pp. 23-24.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸⁸ *Knudahei-brev*. Chr., 1904.

That is, Garborg had not read Dante's *Divine Comedy* when he wrote *I Helheim*. Garborg got his idea in part from *Völuspá*, also *Baldurs Draumar*, and the wise and prophetic *volva* from the Old Norse mythical literature in general.

In this work Garborg shows himself in possession of a powerful imagination. In the descriptions of the horrors and punishments in Helheim, he can scarcely be said to have been outdone by the great Italian. Gislaug, the "heroine" of *Haugtussa*, is taken through the lower world. She is shown how false and futile so many of our most vaunted values are. We wrangle about "true faith" and "right beliefs," but the question asked on the day of judgment is *what hast thou done to make life more happy for thy fellow creatures?* It is impossible to give an adequate idea of this book. It is full of the most powerful imagery, proverbial sayings, longing for righteousness, truth and a truly Christ-like love for humanity. The language is strikingly rich and of the most bewitching melody. There is a complete mastery over the form. In *Haugtussa* and in *I Helheim* we have a modern tale of soul-struggles and salvation in terms of simple peasant life with a background of fairy-lore and mythological and Christian imagery.

The following beautiful lines will give an idea of the philosophy of life and the "way of salvation" presented in *I Helheim*. Veslemøy (Haugtussa), while in her trance, asks her sister how so many of these poor earth-creatures could win their way into Glory.

Veslemøy

"Sæle mi Syster, du segje meg sant
det no eg vil deg beda:
kor kann desse arme Mannaborn
naa denne høge Gleda?"

"Den Kvardags Stakkar full av Synd
og urein og stygg og fæl,
kor kann han her i Ljos faa kvile,
kvitklædd og rein og sæl?"

Systeri

"Den Kvardags Stakkar med Syndi si
seg inn i den Reinleik tøygde,
so ofte han paa si Stakkars Vis
i Kjærleik sin Vilje bøygde."

“Dei muna seg fram ein Mun, so tidt
dei døyvde eit eggjande Ord,
og mana burt ein Illske-Tanke,
og Hemnsverk fraa seg Svor.

“So tidt dei gløymde sitt eigi
og Store-Kravi lydde;
so tidt dei styrkte det fagre paa Jord
og ufint og ufjelgt flydde.

“Kvar Gong dei vann paa vesalt og vondt
dei klæddest i Reinleiks Skrud;
og naar dei auka Fred paa Jordi,
dei var ein Straale av Gud.”⁸⁹

There is one part of *Haugtussa* which merits special mention, and that is the part called *Paa Skare-Kula*. Here we get a witches' sabbath, a sort of festive assemblage of demons, witches, evil-doers, —all the powers of darkness. The poet makes use of the situation to deliver himself of a goodly number of thrusts and sharp criticisms. Most of the creatures which foregather on *Skare-Kula* have a symbolic meaning.

Halvnaki Trollkjerjing

“Paa Viddi med meg flyg tryllte Gut,
til hold og Heile blotnar;
sistpaa sit han i einsleg Sut
med reivar um arm og rotnar

Brille-Kjerjing

“Eg vil at Live visnar i Knupp;
daa skal me snart oss hevja;
eg vekte Kvinna or Svevnen upp
og lærde henne krevja.

“No gjeng ho sterk sin Krevjarveg;
ut vil ho allting teige;
og berre daa vil ho gifte seg,
naar Mannen vil Borni eige.

Trollmannen Likeglad

“Det lite er um den sterke Kar,
naar av han hogger Neven;
eg preikar Fred i Hønsegard,
fyrr eg hev bundi Reven.

⁸⁹ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. V, pp. 276-277.

Trollmann med eit Ris

“Eg trollar i Haug dei leikande Smaa’
og klæd dei i Trælebroki;
naar ut dei kjem kann dei inkje sjaa;
eg batt dei for Augo med Boki.”⁹⁰

Svartebrødrar

“Me sutrar Salmar og Bønir gneg
og mullar Lov og Vangilje,
til Folk trur dette er Livsens Veg,
og gløymer Livsens Vilje.”⁹¹

14. Before I pass to the closing chapter, I want to say a word about *Uforsonlige* (Kjhn., 1888), *Jonas Lie* (Chr., 1893), and *Fjell-Luft* (Chr., 1903). The first of these books is a play which deals with the political situation in Norway at the time of the writing. It is possible to recognize behind the mask of names the then political leaders in Norway. The play is written in Danish. It is not a particularly strong play: the characters and the plot are lost in large stretches of minute dialogue. As to the spirit, one may say that Garborg has as dark a view on politics as Ibsen had in *The League of Youth*.

Jonas Lie is a study of the author by that name. It will suffice us here to say that Garborg in his criticism of this writer emphasizes the *race* and the *milieu*. The book is written in Danish and forms a very suggestive and appreciative study of Jonas Lie. Garborg lets the author define himself by his works. He aims to make clear and to explain, and not so much to judge the art product by certain immutable, traditional laws of a “school.” Comparisons are odious, he holds.

“Overhoved hører mandjevning lidet hjemme i en kritik, der vil være moderne. Hver individualitet er egentlig kun at maale med sit eget maal. At sige, hvem der er f. ex. ‘størst’ af den og den digter, er ofte ligesaa vanskeligt som at afgjøre, hvad der er længst: en fastepræken eller en reberbane.”⁹²

Fjell-Luft is a collection of short stories written at various times. The first one, *Sjø*, was written in 1886 and refers to the death of O. Fjørtoft. *Han Lars i Lia*, written 1893 is a witty little sketch in which the Norwegians are charged with procrastination. When

⁹⁰ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. V, pp. 86-87.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁹² *Jonas Lie*, p. 193.

such a Norwegian farmer as *Lars* has ruined the farm through laziness, he says:

“Ja so piskede fær eg kje til Amerika!”

Paa hi Sida, written 1902, contains a whole life experience in most beautiful language.

CONCLUSION

Garborg is a deeply and sincerely religious nature. Call it weakness or call it strength, the fact remains that Garborg feels the need of religion. *Need* in what way? Not so much to “save the soul,” perhaps, as to give sanctity to life, meaning to existence, and to furnish us a working-ideal of brotherhood and love. But Garborg comes—as we have seen—for a home where narrow, but absolutely sincere, piety reigned. The Bible is in its entirety true, the world is a “vale of tears,” this life is a preparation and a journey, salvation is the “one necessary thing”; worldly position, pomp, and glory, amount to nothing. It was wrong to examine too closely into God’s mysteries (“Stikka naso idn i gus hemmeleheite”). All that gave life value is connected with the soul; all manners and social intercourse are taught on a religious basis. It was a religious system which demanded *all or nothing*. Such an early religious training made it impossible for Garborg to understand the religion of convenient accommodations which many cultured Christians have in this day and age. Religion to him was either the narrow Puritanic system or—nothing; and since it could not long be the former, it became for years the latter.

Garborg has an unusually keen mind, which he early stimulated with a great variety and large amount of reading.⁹³ He could not, therefore, remain with unthinking ease in the religious system of his childhood home. The strict religious discipline which he was subjected to at home made great changes in his character.

“. . . . At mine fyrste Aar var ei god Tid skynar eg av at eg daa var glad i alt og alle som eg hadde med aa gjera; og ikkje minst i 'n Far. Sidan vart det annarleis.

“Vendingi skulde vori god. Det var Kristindomen som fekk Skuldi for ho. Men Skuldi hadde nok mindre Kristindomen enn Kristiandomen, eller

⁹³ See *Knudahei-brev*, Chr., 1904, pp. 156-159.

Kyrkjelæra fraa Kristian den sette si Tid. Det var den som no var komi til Magt paa Jæren.

“Heime vart alt snutt um. I ‘Fred’ er Sogo fortald, sant i alt som det gjeld um; her skal eg berre freiste aa faa med noko meir um meg sjølv.

“Det ser ut for meg som eg reint hev vorti umskapt i den Tidi. Eg hev vorti tagall for røddall, og drøymen for djerv, og gruvlesjuk for glad og tiltaksam. Og um mangt eit Hugskifte gjenom Uppvokstren kann koma ‘av seg sjølv,’ so hev vel dette mitt havt ymist Samanheng med det aandelege Luftskifte heime.

“Eg vart beintfram upptamd til Drøymar ved alt dette ‘Gudsord.’ Luther og Johan Arndt og Francke og høgsæle Bispem Brockmann og kva dei alle heitte, dei vart so lange for meg at noko laut eg finne paa, skulde eg klara deim.”⁹⁴

“Men i det heile var det stilt i Huse, og myrkt. Mest laut eg liva paa mine egne Draumar.

“Og deim livde eg paa. Stasa deim til og tøygde deim ut og gjorde deim um att og um att so dei varde mest æveleg. Det var ikkje vanlege Barnedraumar; det vart Sjukdom. Og ei Magt kunde dette Draumtulle faa, so eg stundom heiltupp gløymde Røyndomslive.”⁹⁵

Garborg early made attempts to “get right with God,” and he has repeated them not infrequently through the years; and not so much for personal comfort as to save the dignity and nobility of human life.

“Eg heldt meg sjølv til Jahve i dei Tidene daa eg stræva med aa umvende meg.

“For eg stræva med dette stundom; og det ikkje so lite heller.

“Hugen til det gode var det vel knapt som dreiv meg. Sterke Branskil-dringer fraa Helvite gjorde meir, og so dertil Daudebod, helst slike som kom uventande, eller nære-fraa, eller liksom med serskild Ærend til meg; soleis naar Jamnaldringar døydde.

“Visst er det: eg fekk Aalvor for meg sume Tidir. Daa let eg Draumane fara og stæva med aa koma i Samfund med Gud.

“Eg skulde vita Vegem. Han Far las og fortalde um denne Vegem for oss kvar Sundag; og seinare, daa eg kom i Skulen att, fekk eg ‘Saliggjørelesens Orden’ gjenomgjengin der med, av den eine Skulemeistaren klokare enn den andre.

“Men endaa var Vegem ugreid for meg. Og vart so verande alltid. Den tridje Artikel var i det heile vrang; og det um Hugvendingi og ‘Saliggjørelesens Orden’ var det verste. Eg kunde ikkje lære det forutto dessmeir, annarleis enn so vidt eg greidde det til den Dagen paa Skulen daa me skulde ‘ha det.’ Det var det, maa-tru, at vaar naturlege Forstand var ved Syndi formørket.

“Men eg fekk beda. Slike Bønir skulde Gud alltid høyre, sagde dei. Stundom saag eg au etter i Forklaaringi um ‘Saliggjørelesens Orden.’

“Men Bønine mine hjelpte ikkje. Eg kunde beda so aalvorsamt eg vilde; Hjelp kom det ikkje, so vidt som eg kunde forstaa.

⁹⁴ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. VII, pp. 240-241.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

“So hugsa eg at ein laut vera umvend, um ein skulde kunna beda rett. Kva Raad var her daa? Beda Gud hjelpe meg beda? Eg freista med det. Men hugsa snart, at ein kunde vel ikkje beda rett um det heller fyrr ein var umvend.

“Det vart daa ikkje onnor Raad enn at eg fekk springe yvi Boni so lengi. Eg fekk tru at Gud vilde hjelpe meg likevel, naar han saag det var Aalvor med meg. For han vilde at me skulde umvende oss og komme til Sandheds Erkjendelse.

“Men so kom det verste. Anger yvi Syndi maatte til. Utan den var det ingin Veg aa koma. Eg stræva svart med Angeren. I ‘Fred’ hev eg fortalt um Enok Hove og hans Angerstræv; det meste der er teki fraa meg sjølv.”⁹⁶

“Eg hev gjort ikkje so reint faae slike Tiltak frametter Aari. Og dei vart meir aalvorsame etterkvart, av di eg meir og meir ræddast for denne gaatefulle Syndi mot Anden eller ‘Forhærdelsen.’ Men alltid naar eg hadde stridt ei Stund med aa koma til Gud dovna det av med meg att; i Grunnen hadde eg ikkje noko hjaa Gud aa gjera.”⁹⁷

Garborg gives the following “inventory” of his mind in these early years.

“Forunderleg urydigt hev det sett ut i Hausen min daa eg i Fyrstningi av mitt sekstande Aar stod mi fyrste Lærarprove. Skuleklokskap, Pietisme, Dikttraumar, Fantevisdom, Ibsen og ymist anna rart laag og brautst inn-paa Myrkelofte mitt; men med Lærarprova gjekk det godt; og 16 Aar gamall fekk eg ‘Post’; skulde med Hovude fullt av Barnaskap og Tull vera Lærer og Uppfostrar.”⁹⁸

Garborg wrote in 1872 a poem in *Lærerstandens Avis* called *Tvileren*. We have here a view of the doubter, the freethinker, and, while Garborg must not be identified with this “freethinker,” the poem nevertheless shows us that Garborg already was familiar with doubts and misgivings. The poem is the bitter wail of one who feels that with his loss of religion all the values and aims and purposes of life have likewise departed. I quote here the first stanza.

“Ak, vidste jeg bare en eneste Kvist
At hvile min vaklende Fod paa!
En Grundvold sikker og uden Brist
At bygge mit bævende Bod paa!
Ak, vidste jeg bare den Ting paa Jord,
Som Sindet fik samle og styrke,
En eneste Ting, som var ren og stor
Og maned min Kraft til Yrke.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *Skrifter i Samling*, Vol. VII, pp. 253-254.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁹⁹ *Illustreret Norsk Litteraturhistorie*, p. 894.

Garborg begins his career by defending Christianity against Jaabæk and Georg Brandes.

“Om Kristus angribes, da gjælder det kamp til blodet.”¹⁰⁰

In 1878 we find him saying that Christianity cannot have a place of special privilege and immunity from criticism.

“. . . Stengja tankar ute er i lengdi likso vandt som aa stengja fraa seg lufti. —Ætti maa *tenkja sine tankar ut*, der er raadlaust med det. Ho er mindre ‘sæl’ og hev meir sut og kav og strid ved dette; men kavet og strævet høyrer med til livet likso vel som sæla.

“. . . Du kann ikkje velja kristendomen blindt. Du maa *prøva* um lærdomen er av Gud. Du maa *prøva* alt og velja ut det gode.—Men naar kristendomen sjølv set upp den frie gransking til grunn- og drivtanke, so hev ingen rett til aa leggja band paa henne.”¹⁰¹

In a lecture which Garborg gave in *Studentersamfundet* in 1881, he said:

“Man ender med at erkjende, at den som ikke længer kan tro paa barnets vis, han maa tænke paa mandens.

“Alle mellemstandpunkter har vist sig uholdbare, alle forsøg paa at opstille særlige erkjendelsesmaader i det religiøse har ført ud i selvmodsigelse og selvbedrag.

“Der blev intet andet igjen end at lade den frie forskning, den uheldede undersøgelse være det ledende princip ogsaa for den religiøse erkjendelse.”¹⁰²
The emphasis is now upon *reason* as against the attitude of *credo quia absurdum*.

In *Nyt Tidsskrift*, 1883, pp. 427-448, Garborg has a book review of Heuch's *Vantroens Væsen*. This article gives us a precious insight into Garborg's religious condition and beliefs at the time. The spirit is slightly arrogant and somewhat bitter. The attitude is that of one who places much confidence in thought and logic. He lays bare with unmerciful acumen the contradictions of Christian apologetics which abound in the book reviewed. If the pastor (Heuch) would take pains to investigate, he would find that the “infidels” are about agreed that “det religiøse—til dato ialfald—er det, der ligger—udenfor grænserne af de ‘tvingende slutninger’ ” (p. 436). Christians have many fine answers—taken out of the Bible—for all manner of things, but in reality they know no more than the rest of us about the eternal things (p. 437).

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in *Syn og Segn*, Jan. 1911, p. 24.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in *Syn og Segn*, Jan. 1911, p. 25.

¹⁰² Quoted in *Syn og Segn*, Jan. 1911, p. 26.

It is easy for the unsophisticated and ignorant to believe in Christian dogmas.

“Faktisk er det forholdsvis let for uvidenheden og naiviteten at overgive sig til den [Christian dogmas], medens reflektertheden og intelligensen (jeg mener ikke den norske intelligens) har mildest talt—svart for at *gjøre det*” (p. 439).

Garborg sees clearly the questionable nature of Christian logic. He realizes that faith may be sweet to those who are so constituted mentally as to have it; but he directly states, or strongly implies, that faith is something that must grow less and less abundant with the advance of clear thinking and culture. And in the following quotation we have Garborg's idea of the proper, essential nature of the intellectually worthy and self-respecting man.

“Og menneskets, det til virkelig menneskehed udviklede menneskes, væsen er dette: at bøje sig for sandheden overalt, hvor den erkjendes, selv om den er aldrig saa haard at gaa paa for den ‘egoistiske vilje,’—men ogsaa først at bøje sig, naar sandheden har godtgjort sig for den menneskelige bevissthed selv *som sandhed*” (pp. 430-431).

We have above the intellectual *credo* of Garborg.

Garborg's standpoint at this time was—as indeed it has continued to be in its essentials to this day—that happiness is not the most important thing, but worthiness, however much weak flesh may squirm. We are looking for values that shall be able to stand the most profound and rigid scrutiny of human reason, and which neither ask for, nor need, immunity on the ground of their sanctity or super-sensuous, super-natural, super-rational nature. Thought must be free, free to lead us wheresoever it rightly leads—even unto the death of the body and the destruction of our patched-up happiness. No considerations of mere expedience must be allowed to interfere with the logical development of a thought or line of reasoning, or make us shrink from a conclusion which follows necessarily from true premises. Thought cannot, and should not, be controlled by anything else than—more thought. It is in the deepest sense a “law unto itself.” If it is said that thought is but a weak thing, that our human reason is no light but rather a stain on the mighty darkness which surrounds us, the answer must be: It is the best we have, however imperfect it may be; and in determining its very imperfection, we still have to appeal to it. To what else could we appeal?

But Garborg could not long rest content with mere intellectu-

alism. Man does not live by reason alone. It was not long before he felt like exclaiming with Pascal: "*Tais-toi, raison imbécile!*" He then turned to seek satisfaction in the beauty of art. However, art increases our longing, but brings us no wings. He tried science. But science gives us pompous hypotheses and theories, and has precious little to say about what we would most like to know.

Garborg has tried many solutions to the problems of life. He has a fine, sympathetic study of Nietzsche in *Syn og Segn* for 1895; but Garborg does not accept his solution, his scorn for the "common rabble," his poetic adoration for and visionary faith in the *Uebermensch*.

What then? Tolstoy's solution? Garborg has in *Syn og Segn*, 1896, a study on Tolstoy, in which he treats with feeling and understanding the idea of a return to Christ, the teacher, and to the simple life of the peasants, in which life honest work is performed and where existence has—in a limited sense at least—a meaning. I am not saying that Garborg was converted by the teachings of the great Russian. He may have profited by the suggestions of Tolstoy, but for the main part he came to similar results independently.¹⁰³ Garborg, as well as Tolstoy, is deeply religious; both have become more and more prophets and teachers while continuing to be supreme literary artists.

In an article in *Samtiden* for 1895 we find the following dark view of things.

"Jeg har brudt mit hoved i et fjerdedels aarhundrede og er nu sikker paa, at pessimismen har ret.

"Endnu har jeg ikke stødt paa, ei heller kunnet udspekulere, nogen positiv verdensforklaring, som ikke faldt sønder og sammen for den første straaale af alvorlig kritik, saa snart denne blev rettet mod dens afgjørende punkt, dens sidste og højeste *cui bono*. Intet system, ingen teori, ingen læresætning eller formel, som søger en 'mening i livet,' kan bestaa. Den opløser sig ubarmhertigt i tomhed.

"Der gives ikke engang nogen religion, som kan hjælpe os. Vi har jo alle en stille svaghed for kristendommen; den maa jo siges at give et slags svar paa de 'store spørgsmaal.' Men selv om vi stryger dens dualisme og lader den lære almindelig og evig salighed, staar tilværelsens gaade uforklaret alligevel. En himmel, saadan som den læres, vilde—efter Schopenhauers slemme, men oprigtige udtryk—blive den uendelige Langeweile. Vi maatte tænke os saligheden som den absolute ro, i.e., individualitetens ophævelse. Den mest ration-

¹⁰³ See *Samtiden* for 1911, where Hulda Garborg maintains that Garborg was not "converted" by Tolstoy.

elle af alle religiøs-moralske systemer opfatter den da ogsaa ganske rigtig saa. Nirwana er afslutningen af al kamp, ophævelsen af al indskrænkning, individets flyden over i det uendelige alt, i.e., intet. Men denne 'livsforklaring' blir da altsaa simpelthen pessimismens. Livets maal er at ophæve sig selv.

"De fleste, som ræsonnerer over disse ting, gaar ikke tilbunds i tingen. Dels fordi de ikke er istand til det, dels fordi de ikke i tilstrækkelig grad har 'den erkjendendes mod' eller—for at tale endnu mere Nietzsche'sk—hans 'grusomhed.' Rent instinktmæssig skulker tanken unna, naar det kniber. Den liker ikke at møde sin store antithese, ufornuften, tomheden, logikens satan, der—som teologiens—faktisk er langt sterkere end sin gud. Man finder altid i det afgjørende øieblik en eller anden sky at drage for; i den lader man da solen byrde sig med allehaande skjønhed og forgyldning. Hvorpaas tankens og livets seier proklameres med sang og klang. Men om nogen tid stikker Mefisto sit hoved ind tværs gjennem samme sky og spør med sit forbindtligste smil, om han maaske kan være de damer og herrer paa nogen maade til tjeneste.

"Skal vi tale ganske fornuftmæssigt og ganske oprigtigt, saa er det virkelig bare en smagssag, om man vil gjøre opbud selv og overgive sit bo, eller om man vil vente de par aar, til rettens mand kommer."¹⁰⁴

But from now on the views are less gloomy and hopeless. The idea now is to work for the native land, work for social reform, the establishment of the Norwegian national speech, in short, *earnest endeavor along humanly possible lines.*

Garborg is one of those who are more inclined to analyze life than to live it. He has, in his transition from the narrow religious system of his childhood to his present standpoint, suffered much; but all this suffering has deepened his nature. Sorrow and suffering is good for a strong person. If there is strength enough in the character, the heart is not dried up, the will is not lamed, and one comes out of the struggle more profound, more sympathetic, more largely human and humane. It is only the weak that break under the strain and become embittered.

Garborg has never been a mere irreverent mocker. Disrespectful treatment of fundamental things is not a Norwegian trait. He has combatted the narrow religious system in which he was brought up, but he did so only because he felt such a course to be absolutely necessary. This religious system, though humble before God, is, as an influence in the world, essentially militant, intolerant, and despotic. It condemns in unmistakable terms whatever does not readily square with its program of life. It is in many ways inimical to a large, free, powerful unfolding of life; it looks askance

¹⁰⁴ Arne Garborg, "Troen paa livet." *Samtiden*, 1895, pp. 9-7.

at art as being a frivolous waste of time, if not actually a baneful worldly influence to turn minds away from God and the meditation upon the means of saving one's soul. Hence Ibsen, Bjørnson, and Garborg found it necessary to clear the stage and make room for themselves, in short, to get a place in the sun. They felt that man's nature must have room for the unhampered exercise of its legitimate powers and faculties, and that a social and religious system is bad when it hinders a free, and harmonious, development of the individual.

Garborg has always had a sincere longing for permanent values, for something which shall vindicate the sacredness of human life, and keep safe the meaning of the good, old words, *faith*, *hope* and *charity*. The religious basis of his early years gave way. What new basis could he find so that life might continue to be worthy and human effort be of value? Through years of sorrow and anguish Garborg has sought for some approving system, some faith, some guiding principle; and he has finally come back to a more or less complete reconciliation with life: Let us work in the *here* and *now* without too much questioning about the *why* and the *wherefore* of things—such seems to be his present standpoint.